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## LONG KNIVES

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BY

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

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THE HUGE BEAST SPRANG FORWARD AND SEIZED THE MUZZLE  
OF THE GUN IN ITS JAWS. — *Page 31.*

# LONG KNIVES

THE STORY OF HOW THEY WON THE WEST

BY

GEORGE CARY EGGLESTON

Author of "Jack Shelby," "The Bale Marked Circle X," "Camp Venture,"  
"The Last of the Flat-Boats," etc.

*ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK T. MERRILL*



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LONG KNIVES

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## PREFACE

In the main this story is the simple history of one of the most wonderful military achievements ever accomplished by the genius of a commander and the limitless endurance of his men.

The story is here told in the form of fiction, but there is really very little fiction in it, and that little deals only with matters of minor moment.

The main body of facts, together with George Rogers Clark's speeches to the Creoles and the Indians, have been drawn from authentic and accepted historical writings, Clark's addresses being exact copies from his own reports and from his Memoir.

The story of wonderful achievement with almost absurdly inadequate means, is so romantic and so dramatic in itself as to leave the novelist next to nothing to do but tell it.

But it happened that several of my own

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ancestors, and many of the ancestors of the people who were my neighbors in childhood, were soldiers under George Rogers Clark. As a consequence my early life had for its inspiration many stories of that marvellous campaign—stories transmitted from sire to son, and bearing with them, as the testimony of eye-witnesses, even more of historical authority than the official records do.

It is from these stories, related to my wondering ears, in early childhood, in front of great pioneer kitchen fire-places, that I have drawn those parts of the present story which the reader may perhaps regard as fiction in embellishment of history.

The Virginians who, under Clark conquered the West and made the glory and greatness of our country possible, were called by the Indians "Long Knives" or "Big Knives." The Indian word meant either "long" or "big" as the translator might choose. President Roosevelt and some other writers use the form "Big Knives." I have preferred to write "Long Knives," partly because that was the term

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made familiar to me in my childhood by the fireside narrators of these wonder stories, who had heard the name from the lips of the Long Knives themselves, and partly because the hunting knives—of which I have examined many scores—were really not big in any dimension but length. It was not until Col. Bowie altered the “Long Knife” of the huntsmen into the “Bowie Knife,” for purposes of fight that it became “big.”

So much by way of explanation. Now to the story.



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# LONG KNIVES

## I

### OUT OF THE DARKNESS

**T**HE fires were burning low under the salt kettles when Tom Harrod ventured out of the woodlands and into their light. He skimmed the contents of the kettles with the utmost care and an extreme delicacy of touch, for if he should disturb more than the surface, he knew, the magnesia which he wished to remove would precipitate and mingle itself with the slowly forming salt, which he wished to preserve in its purity.

His two comrades were still creeping about in the woods looking for the intruder whose approach had prompted all of them to retreat from the firelight into the shadows lest they make targets of themselves. But

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the time had come when the kettles must be skimmed, and at risk of his life Tom Harrod had come out of the gloom and into the glow to attend to them. He was well used to taking risks when duty required.

It was on a night in early June, in the year 1778. The place was a salt lick in what was then the Virginia county of Kentucky, not more than one or two days' journey from the falls of the Ohio, where the city of Louisville now stands, but where at that time there was not even a hamlet to suggest the coming of a great busy and prosperous city.

At that time there were only a few hundred people living in the vast region now known as Kentucky, and their rude log cabins were so widely scattered that in many cases a family's nearest neighbors dwelt a dozen or twenty miles away.

These were men of daring and adventurous spirit, who had crossed the mountains from Virginia and the Carolinas, partly in search of adventure, partly in pursuit of their game-hunting instinct, and partly to

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possess themselves of one of the fairest and richest regions of country that ever existed upon earth. Curiosity to see new lands and encounter new experiences,—in other words the travel instinct—was also a part of their impulse. So was the love of danger for its own sake, for every hour of their lives in that wilderness was an hour of danger to each and all of them.

There were hostile Indians often about them, and great bodies of hostile Indians in the region north of the Ohio river. Worse still, the Indians north of the river were continually instigated by the British commander at Detroit to do all the savage butchery they could among the Americans, west of the Allegheny mountains.

The Revolutionary war was in progress at that time. The British held Canada, and they had declared all the region west of the mountains—all of what we now call Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan—to be a part of Canada; so that even if the Americans should succeed in winning their independence, they would be shut in and

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helpless within a narrow strip of country lying between the mountains and the sea, with a strongly held British possession north and west of them.

In order to hold that western possession and to drive out of it the venturesome Virginians and Carolinians who had crossed the mountains to take possession of it and to build up homes for themselves there, the British commander at Detroit had entered into an unholy alliance with the savage Indians of the Northwest. Not only did he furnish them with arms, ammunition, and provisions, but he actually instigated them to their savage warfare upon men, women and children alike, by offering them money bounties upon all the *scalps* they might bring in, whether scalps of men in arms, of peaceful citizens, of women, or of helpless little children. In brief, this infamous scoundrel, Henry Hamilton, deliberately hired the Indians to butcher all the Americans west of the mountains, of whatever age or sex they might be.

But the few hundred Virginians and Caro-

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linians who had journeyed westward and settled in Kentucky, were a daring and resolute set of men and women. They were prepared to fight Indians or anybody else in defense of their right to live in a country that was their own.

They lived in lonely log cabins built in such "clearings" as they had been able to make in the wonderfully dense forest with which the entire country was covered. A "clearing" was a space from which the trees had been cut in order to convert the land into farm fields. For the most part these fields had been so recently cleared that they were still studded with the stumps of the trees which had been cut away, so that their cultivation involved a vast deal of very hard work. But the pioneers were no more afraid of work than they were of danger. Sometimes, when the settler had not had time to clear his fields, the cabins were built in "deadenings"—that is to say, spaces on which the trees had been killed by cutting the bark away in a ring around each. Trees so "deadened" bore no leaves, of course, and

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so crops of corn could be grown among them, and when they became seasoned they could be burned down merely by building fires about their roots in the autumn after the crops were gathered.

Some of the pioneers protected their cabins against Indian attacks by building stockades of logs set on end around them, from behind which the members of the family, all armed with rifles that they knew how to use with deadly effect, could defend themselves against many times their own number.

Others built strong blockhouses near their cabins, into which they could retire when attacked. These block-houses were built of heavy logs hewed square and laid closely upon each other, leaving no spaces between. The upper story of a blockhouse was larger than the lower, projecting a foot or two beyond it on every side. This rendered it impossible for an enemy to scale it. There were narrow slits to shoot through.

Every night the pioneer had to bring home his cattle in order to protect them against the forays of marauding Indians,

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and if there was a stockade, he enclosed them within it.

Thus every home was a fortress and its occupants knew how to defend themselves, how to feed themselves upon the game with which the woodlands abounded, and how to meet death with calm, unflinching courage if occasion to do that should come to them. Every man among them knew how to shoot a rifle with such precision of aim as to kill squirrels without breaking their skins, by striking with a bullet the tree branch on which they sat, at a point just under their chins. Indeed their skill with the rifle was such that if by any chance one of them missed his aim he instantly decided that his gun was bewitched. In that case he fired a silver bullet from it by way of breaking the evil spell. Moreover, they were so "quick on trigger," as they phrased it, that if a Spanish silver dollar were tossed in the air at a rifle range distance, they could hit it with a bullet no larger than a goodly sized pea, before it fell to the ground again.

But the men were not the only marksmen,

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nor always the best ones. The ability to shoot with deadly precision was, in that time and country, at once a necessary means of securing food and an imperative need of defense. So, from early infancy, all the boys and girls were taught to shoot, so that they might kill the game they needed for food, and so that in case of an Indian attack they might do their share of the shooting necessary for the enemy's discomfiture and destruction. One old record which is still preserved shows that at a "shooting match" a boy of seven bore off the honors for accuracy of aim, and that his sister, a little girl of eight, won a haunch of venison as the second best shot of all the company.

Day and night, winter and summer, these people were constantly exposed to raids of the Indians from the region north of the Ohio river, raids led by skilled English or Canadian French officers who did not shrink in disgust, as civilized soldiers should have done, from the indiscriminate butchery in which their Indian allies indulged, but on the contrary stimulated the savagery of their

## OUT OF THE DARKNESS

red-skinned associates and themselves joined in the slaughter and the scalplings.

The Virginians in Kentucky called Hamilton, the British commandant at Detroit, who directed all this, the "Hair-Buyer general," because he bought scalps, and he deserved the epithet of infamy.

The Virginians in Kentucky were called by the Indians "Long Knives," or "Big Knives" because every man of them carried a long hunting knife in his belt, with which to finish the game when he had shot it, with which to skin and dress it, and with which to cut up his food when he came to his meals. The knife served other purposes also, and was the hunter's chief reliance for comfort and convenience, precisely as his unerring rifle was his chief reliance for the defense of his home and for the killing of the game which constituted the principal part of his family's meat supply.

Under stress of such a life boys and girls early became as self-reliant as grown men and women were, and they were often charged with arduous and difficult duties

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which, in a less strenuous time, would have been undertaken only by their elders.

Tom Harrod and his companions at the salt lick were mere boys, in age at least, but there had been no thought of hesitation in sending them to do what would ordinarily be accounted a task for grown men. Tom was sixteen years old, but after the manner of pioneer boys, he had—as people in that country phrased it—“outgrown his breeches.” That is to say, he was nearly six feet high, lean, muscular, strong—as active as a cat, and so far accustomed to the conditions of frontier life that nothing in the way of difficulty or danger daunted him, while it never occurred to him, under any conceivable circumstances, that he had need of any older man’s guidance or even of advice and counsel at the hands of any older man. The education of danger and of hard experience had been his from his earliest childhood, and all that it could teach of resolute self-reliance, he had learned. He knew how to walk long distances without weariness. He knew

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how to take care of himself in the woods, how to sleep wherever he might happen to be when the night fell, how to provide himself with food, and, if need be, how to go for long periods without food. There wasn't a flinch or a whimper in him and, mere boy that he was in years, he was in fact and experience a strong, resolute and thoroughly self-reliant man, ready to undertake any duty and discharge it well; ready to endure any hardship and make the best of it; ready to encounter any danger with calm-minded and alert ingenuity of resource, and ready, if necessary, to meet death itself without a thought of faltering.

In all this he was not exceptional. All the boys he knew in Kentucky were of the same kind. It was about the best breed of boys that has ever been grown upon this earth of ours, and the debt this country owes to such boys of the West is one that can never be accurately estimated. It was they, as will appear in the course of this story, who won and saved the great West to the

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Republic and made it possible for our country to become the greatest, freest, best nation in the world.

There were salt springs in several parts of Kentucky. They and the lands round about them were called salt "licks" because for ages the deer, the round-horned elk, the bears and the buffalo that abounded in that region had resorted in great numbers to these spots, to lick the soil for the sake of its salt. These wild animals had visited these places in such countless numbers that they had trampled great highways through the forest, destroying the undergrowth and wearing away even the thick carpet of grass with which insistent nature was apt to cover every inch of ground that the sun had a chance to shine upon.

To these salt licks the pioneers, or "Long Knives," went now and then to secure a supply of salt by boiling the water of the springs. They went thither also to kill the wild game which frequented such places for purposes of licking. At first every pioneer who went to the licks to make salt had to

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carry his own kettles with him, but soon that spirit of mutual helpfulness which always inspired the pioneer life, prompted the Long Knives to set up a series of big kettles at each lick and to leave them there for the use of any others who might come.

Tom Harrod, with two younger boys, had been sent to make salt, and their task was now nearly finished. They had brought with them a bag of meal, and no other provisions whatsoever. On the journey to the salt lick they had killed squirrels and other small game in numbers sufficient to their need. Soon after arriving at the lick Tom had killed one of the great, hulking, round-horned elks that abounded in that region, and upon the dainty meat thus secured the boys had lived during their fortnight or more of salt boiling. Elk steaks, broiled on the coals of a beechwood fire, with corn meal loaves cooked in the ashes of the same fire, had seemed to them food fit for a king—fit even for General Washington, whom they would complacently have invited to dine with them, if he had been there, never for a mo-

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ment thinking it necessary to apologize for the slenderness of their bill of fare.

During their salt boiling work the boys had kept themselves constantly on the alert, of course. There was always the possibility of an Indian attack, and the Long Knives never lost sight of that danger for one moment, night or day, at home or abroad.

At this particular time there was no special danger of that kind. No Indian foray south of the river was known to be in progress. If such had been threatened the boys would have known of it, for in every such case the alarm was quickly given to every cabin throughout that region, and men were promptly mustered to meet and if possible to repel the attack.

But there were sneaking, lurking Indians always about, and it was the practice of these to creep through the woods at night, and from the shadows of the thickets, pick off those who were careless enough to sit in the full glare of camp fires. The salt licks especially were subject to such Indian

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hauntings, and so the Long Knives who went thither to make salt were particularly alert to meet that danger. After nightfall they kept away from the kettle fires except at such times as the salt making process compelled their presence there. At such times they did their duty at jaunty risk of their lives. In the same way they went to the fires when necessary for the purpose of cooking their food, but at such times those of them who were not needed at the fire were sent to prowl through the dark woodlands in search of lurking enemies.

On the evening on which this story opens the three boys had heard the breaking of a stick out in the woods, indicating a suspicious presence there. Taking their rifles in their hands they had quickly begun a search, each boy going in a direction different from that taken by the others, and each creeping as noiselessly as possible through the brushes.

But the salt boiling was at that stage of its progress when the kettles must be

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skimmed, and Tom Harrod, the commandant of the party, boldly went to the fires and performed that duty.

As he was doing it a young white man—twenty five or twenty six years old—suddenly emerged from the bushes and boldly marching into the full glare of the fire, called out:

“Evenin’, stranger. Kin I git some-thin’ to eat?”

## II

### QUICK ON TRIGGER

**H**OSPITALITY was regarded as the supreme virtue, next to courage, in that wild western land. Every stranger who might present himself at any cabin door was held to be entitled to food and lodging, not as a matter of privilege, but as a matter of human right. The best that the pioneer had was freely offered to the stranger, quite as a matter of course. In a land in which there were no taverns every man going upon a journey must be in some degree dependent upon hospitality from day to day and from night to night, and so every man in his turn stood ready to extend hospitality to whatever stranger there might be at his gates.

In that spirit Tom Harrod promptly extended to this stranger the freedom of his

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camp, asking him to share in the ash cake and the broiled slices of venison that were presently to constitute the boys' evening meal.

But there was another side to wild western hospitality. The guest who was made free of bed and board was expected in answer to questions, to give an account of himself—to tell who he was and whence he came and whither he was going and why,—all this merely for the sake of friendly conversation. Accordingly, when Tom Harrod gave a signal, calling the other boys in to the camp, and when the juicy venison and the hot ash cake were nearly ready to be set out on bark platters laid upon the trunk of a fallen tree that served as a table, the three young Long Knives questioned their guest without a thought of impertinence or a suspicion of prying.

"I come from up on the Holston," he answered,—“up in old Virginia, you know. You see Col. Clark, he's done got leave o' the governor to 'list some companies an' bring 'em out here to defend Kaintucky

## QUICK ON TRIGGER

county. Most of his men he got up the state somewheres, an' he took 'em to Pittsburg an' brung 'em down the river to the Falls on flatboats. But us fellers what 'listed up in the Holston country was as clost to the Falls, or purty nigh it, as we was to Pittsburg; so Col. Clark ordered us to march acrost country to the Falls. Well, you see when we got there we began to suspicion like, that we'd been fooled."

"Not by Col. Clark," said Tom. "Any man who says that, lies and that's all there is about it. I've known George Rogers Clark ever since I was knee high. He never cheated or deceived anybody in his life, and you shan't say he did when I'm by to hear you say it."

"Well, anyhow we heard it talked around that instid o' bringin' us out here to defend Kaintucky county he was a plannin' to march us away off somewheres to fight British an' Injuns an' Frenchmen, an' we seen mighty clear that he hadn't half enough men to resk sich a thing as that. He hadn't no more'n a hundred an' twenty men, an'

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scarcely that, while they do say that if he was to go up into the Injun country anywheres the British could muster two or three thousand to say nothin' of the Injuns. So us fellers, we just made up our minds not to go on no such fool expedition as that. We jest backed out, though I'm free to say I, for one, didn't like backin' out a bit. Anyhow, we jest quit three nights ago an' started to go back to the Holston country. But we're findin' it a purty hard job, 'cause Col. Clark he sent his hoss soldiers out to ketch us an' he tole 'em to kill every one of us. Then agin, all the people out here in Kaintucky county seems to be sot agin' us. 'Taint only that they won't give us nothin' to eat, but a good many of 'em is a gunnin' fer us in the woods, so's we dassen't even shoot game, 'case if they heared us shoot they'd be on to us, quick. That's why I ain't had nothin' to eat for so long. I kin stan' still in the woods an' coax squirrels to come to me, an' of course I mout have killed some that way, but I ain't never yit betrayed a squirrel or a bird that come to me that

## QUICK ON TRIGGER

way an' I ain't agoin' to begin now. I'll starve to death first. I don't know what I should 'a' done ef I hadn't found you fellers. Seems like they ain't no way out'n this here thing. Every which way I try to go, they's somebody a watchin' to shoot me. I reckon the hoss soldiers has done ketched most of our fellers, and I reckon some o' these Kaintucky people 'll shoot me 'fore I'm done with it."

"Drop that!" sharply commanded Tom Harrod, rising and bringing his rifle to his shoulder, just as his guest was about to begin upon his first strip of venison. "Drop that meat quick!" and the stranger obeyed. "You're a deserter. You can't have bite or sup with us. You may starve to death in the woods if you choose, or you may live on fish worms and snails and snakes, and maybe in that way you can make your way back to the Holston, but you can't have any help from us."

The boy's angry determination was so obvious, and with his rifle at his shoulder, he was so intent upon enforcing it, that the

## LONG KNIVES

stranger instantly dropped the food he was just bringing to his hungry lips, and entered a protest.

"Well, it wa'n't fair, you see," he said. "Us fellers was 'listed on the Holston to defend Kaintucky, an' when we got down there to Corn Island at the Falls, we found out, or suspicioned, that Clark intended to march us 'way over into the Illinois, to fight Englishmen and Frenchmen and Injuns. So we backed out, though, as I said before, I'd a ruther a stayed."

"Yes, you turned cowards as soon as you found that George Rogers Clark meant to defend Kentucky in the only way in which it can be defended—that is to say, by conquering the Illinois and driving the British and their French and Indian allies out of that region."

"But you see," said the man, pleadingly, "he hain't got men enough for to go on no sich a expedition with. He hain't got no more'n a hundred an' ten or twenty men, an' a thousand would be too few fer sich a undertakin'."

## QUICK ON TRIGGER

“Yes,” answered Tom Harrod, “and because he hasn’t men enough you and your cowardly comrades from the Holston have deserted him, leaving him with a still smaller force. Just at the time when you were most needed you quit like the white-livered creatures you are. Very well. You may find your way back to Holston, but if you do you’ll do it without any aid from us, and more than that, you’ll do it without any aid from your rifle or your powder horn or your bullet pouch or your long knife, for I’ll trouble you to lay them aside right now.”

Tom Harrod’s comrades, after the manner of the Kentuckians of that time, had quietly risen, seized their rifles and placed themselves at their leader’s side, ready to enforce his commands to the letter.

“Now choose!” commanded Tom. “George Rogers Clark needs men, and you are one of those who allowed him to pay your way out here with the money of the State of Virginia. He paid your way on condition that you should be one of his fighting men. Now I offer you a choice.

## LONG KNIVES

Either you'll go back to him and fulfil your soldier's contract or I shall *strip you stark naked*, and turn you loose in the woods without your rifle or your powder horn or your bullet pouch or your knife or anything else. Come! say it quick, which shall it be?"

The man cowered and quailed. He knew Tom Harrod's sort, and he knew how certainly the boy would stand by the words he had spoken.

"I'll go back to Clark," he answered, "an' I'll serve out my term of 'listment. You see I didn't want to back out as I tole you before. It's the first time in my life that I ever did sich a thing, but all the other fellers said we'd been fooled and tricked, an' they argified as how we must stand together for our rights, an' so I had to do as the rest did, and then when we quit an' started to march back Col. Clark he sent the hoss soldiers after us, an' they killed most of us an' scattered the rest, an' everybody in Kaintucky turned agin us jest as you fellers has done, so we can't git a mouthful o' food."

## QUICK ON TRIGGER

“That’s all right,” answered Tom Harrod. “We Long Knives of Kentucky haven’t any use for cowards and sneaks. You men from the Holston agreed to go as soldiers under Col. Clark. It wasn’t his business to tell you where he was going or what enemies he was going to fight. You enlisted to fight. You backed out the moment you learned that you were to do real soldiers’ work. You had expected to be housed in forts and stockades, and other safe places, and to live on the fat of the land. When you found out that George Rogers Clark had enlisted you as soldiers and meant to use you as soldiers in making real war, you deserted him and the cause for which he is fighting. I don’t believe all of you are cowards. I think some of you were simply misled and over persuaded. I don’t know to which class you belong, but you can decide that for yourself. I’m going to join Clark, as every Kentuckian is who can be spared from the direct defense of his own home. You can go with me, or you can set out for the Holston without a stitch of

## LONG KNIVES

clothing—as naked as you were when you were born.”

“I’ll go with you,” answered the man. “It wouldn’t be anything like puddin’ to go back to the Holston anyhow to be laughed at an’ called a coward for the rest of my born days. I’ll go back to Corn Island if you’ll do what you kin to git Col. Clark to fergit an’ fergive.”

“I’ll arrange all that” answered the boy confidently. “And now if you’ll stick to that you can have your supper.”

The man ate ravenously. He had been without food ever since he had left Corn Island three days before. He had been compelled to hide in the woods for the greater part of the time, not daring even to shoot game lest Clark’s cavalry or the angry Kentuckians should come upon him and execute Clark’s order to put every deserter to death. At such cabins as he had ventured to approach in search of that food which the pioneers under ordinary circumstances would have been glad to furnish gratuitously and lavishly to a stranger, he

## QUICK ON TRIGGER

had been turned away in anger as soon as he had made himself known as a deserter. The Long Knives, and their women folk as well, were mercilessly resolute in their condemnation of cowards and deserters. Boundlessly hospitable as they were, they had neither victuals nor drink to give to the man who had deserted George Rogers Clark in the hour of his need. Every such man who asked for food at a Kentuckian's cabin was warned to take himself off the premises quickly, upon pain of having a bullet sent through his body, or a pack of wolf hounds set upon him.

The poor fellow rested easily now that he had made his peace by agreeing to return to Clark's camp, and in the meanwhile he was fully fed for the first time in many days. He was full of gratitude to Tom and his companions and he was eager to help them. He did help them in an important way. They were in a hurry to finish their salt making, take the product home to those who had employed them, and then be off to join George Rogers Clark—a thing which all

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three of them had decided to do—or rather a thing they were going to do without any deciding about it.

Their last salt boiling was thickening in the kettles, and when supper was done Tom announced that it needed only drying.

“But that will take three days at least,” said Sim Crane, with melancholy in his voice.

“Yes, I suppose it will,” answered Tom.

“Not if you manage it right,” answered their guest, whose name, as they had learned, was Hawk Camden.

“Why, do you know anything about salt making?” asked Tom, eagerly.

“Yes. I worked a whole year at it down on the Kanawha. What do you dry your salt on?”

“On the canvas wagon cover spread out on the ground.”

“That’s what makes it take three days to dry,” answered the man. “Now let me show you.”

With that he took the wagon cover and swung it between trees, fastening its ropes

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to limbs so that the canvas hung four feet or more from the ground.

“Now spread your salt on that, thin like—jest as thin as you kin, an’ you’ll find it as dry as a bone by noon to-morrow or not long arterwards. You see, when you spread the canvas on the ground the water in the salt soaks down into the canvas. Then you have a soppin’ wet canvas underneath the salt an’ there’s no chance fer it to dry ’ceptin’ from the top. But when it’s hung up this way the air gits a chance at the underside o’ the canvas an’ dries it so’s it kin take more an’ more of the wet from the salt. You see the air is the thirstiest thing they is in all nature an’, ef you give it a fa’r chance it’ll swaller rivers o’ water.”

As he talked the man spread the salt upon the canvas.

“It’s drippin’ wet,” he said, calling attention to the water droppings that were falling from the under side of the cloth, “but it’ll quit that purty soon, you’ll see, an’ then your salt will dry.”

At that moment there was a noise in the

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bushes near at hand, and the boys, each seizing his rifle, retreated into the shadows to await developments.

The other boys lay still, waiting. But Tom Harrod never could be still for any length of time. He was possessed by a demon of restless energy, and impelled by it, he silently slipped away into the woods in search of the cause of their alarm. He had all the arts of the Indian at command, plus those of the pioneer huntsman. He knew how to move noiselessly through a thicket, even in the densest darkness of night, never by any accident treading upon a fallen twig that might make a noise in breaking, never letting a brush recoil from his hand with a swish, and never making a misstep however tangled the woodland might be. All of this had been bred in Tom Harrod from infancy until now it was a second nature to him.

Another thing. His ears were trained, not only to catch the slightest suggestion of a sound, but to locate it instantly and accurately—a thing far more difficult than

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most persons understand. It is upon the lack of such training that the ventriloquist presumes when he deceives his auditors by what is mistakenly called "throwing his voice" in one or another direction.

Thus equipped, with every sense alert, Tom silently moved through the bushes until he came out upon the salt lick. There, not twenty feet away, he saw by the glow of the distant fire, a huge black bear, busily licking the soil for its savor of salt.

The bear in its turn was as alert in all its senses and as prompt in action as Tom Harrod himself was. Before Tom could bring his rifle to his shoulder the huge beast sprang forward and seized the muzzle of the gun in its jaws and its great muscular fore paws at one and the same moment. Tom instantly understood that within a fraction of another second the beast would twist the weapon so that it could not be fired at all. Feeling that life and death depended upon his own promptitude of action he touched the hair trigger, and the great black beast fell to earth with a bullet through his brain

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—a bullet that had been driven into the back of the mouth and thence out at the top of the skull.

Tom passed his hand hurriedly along the barrel of his piece and found to his very great satisfaction that the weapon was in nowise bent. The barrel of a Kentucky rifle in those days was a heavy and very stiff piece of metal, with a very small rifle bore in the centre of it. No ordinary force could mar it in the least, but Tom Harrod knew that a big black bear like the one he had encountered, had the strength of many bulls. He knew that if this beast had got a chance to wrench the gun, he would on the instant have made it as crooked and as worthless as a wild grape vine. And as the rifle was the backwoodsman's best friend on earth Tom was rejoiced to discover by a single passage of his hand down the barrel that his quickness on trigger had saved his weapon from injury.

Hurrying to the back of the beast as he lay, and carefully keeping out of reach of any convulsive strokes the great claw tipped

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forepaws might give, Tom finished his work by plunging his long hunting knife into the soft part of the animal's chest and thence into his heart.

### III

#### HURRIED WORK

**N**O sooner was Tom's shot fired than the others of the little party, rifles in hand, rushed through the underbrush to join their comrade and render him any assistance he might need. The shot might mean the presence of Indians, or it might mean anything else. In any case they might be needed with their ever ready rifles, and after the helpful manner of the courageous men of that time, these youngsters hurried to Tom's side, ready for whatever might await them there.

They found Tom hurriedly reloading his rifle. As soon as they saw what the occasion of the alarm and the shot had been, they set themselves to complete the work to be done. Securing grape-vines they swung the bear head downward to a limb, and set

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to work to remove his skin and dress his great fat carcass.

In this task Hawk Camden, who had been a hunter all his life, helped them skilfully, and when it was done he ventured a suggestion.

"It's June now," he said, "an' they's a lot o' flies about, an' all that sort o' thing. Why not smoke the b'ar so's to git him home good an' sound?"

"But we haven't time," objected Tom. "We shan't stay here more than one more day and it takes weeks to smoke bear bacon."

"That ain't what I meant," said Hawk. "I didn't mean to make bacon but jest to keep the fresh meat sweet. Ef we salt the outside of it well an' then give it a few hours of thick smoke, it'll dry off like, an' keep sweet, an' best of all the flies can't git at it, partic'lar ef they happens to be good sunlight to-morrow, as the stars promises now. Fer ef you leave fresh meat in a strong sunshine, it dries a sort o' black crust all over it so's that nothin' kin git at it."

As Hawk evidently knew the art of pre-

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serving game in this way better than any of the Kentucky boys did, they let him direct the operation. Using an ax for cleaver, he cut the bear into large pieces. These the boys salted, rubbing the salt into all soft spots and all exposed places around the bone. Then the company built a rack of poles to which they hung the great pieces of meat, taking care that no two pieces should touch each other at any point. Next they built a little fire under the racks and spread a shelter of bushes over them in such fashion as to keep a dense smoke shut in around the meat. They were careful not to let the fire blaze up, but so to smother it as to make it yield the greatest possible volume of smoke.

They worked all night at this and at the stirring of the slowly drying last instalment of salt.

About ten o'clock the next morning, as the sun was shining fiercely, the boys tore down the smoke house shelter and hung the meat in the strongest sunlight and the fullest currents of air they could anywhere find. As Hawk Camden had predicted, a hard,

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thin, black crust formed upon the meat, as hard, Tom said, as the bark of a hickory tree.

By two o'clock Tom had satisfied himself that the curing of the meat was a success and in the meanwhile he had fully formed his plans.

He helped his comrades load the wagon they had brought with them with the salt they had manufactured and with the deer and bear meat they had secured. Then, about four o'clock, he said to the elder of the two—a lad of fourteen or fifteen:

“I’m going to send you two fellows home with the wagon. You can manage that as well as I can. I am going straight to the Falls and to Corn Island to join George Rogers Clark. Hawk Camden will go with me. I can’t wait to go home with the wagon for fear Col. Clark may leave before I get to Corn Island. But you two must hurry home with the salt and deliver it. Then you are to get a pack horse or two—they’ll give you what you need when they know where you’re going—load the horses with all this

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meat and all other provisions you can pick up, and come as quickly as you can to the Falls. Hawk and I will carry one hunk of the meat with us to live on. You know your way by the trail. Hawk and I will strike straight through the woods to the Falls."

"But how will you find your way?" asked Ike Todd. "You haven't any compass."

"I'll show you," answered Tom, taking out his big bull's-eye watch, and stepping to a spot where the sun was in full view.

"Now see," he said, holding the watch level in his hand. "It is four o'clock and the hour hand of the watch points to IV. Now when I point the hour hand, standing at IV, in the direction of the sun, that point on the dial which lies exactly half way between IV and XII is due south. That point is II, so that I know that south lies in the direction of the figures II. Now if you know where south is you can easily find any other point of the compass. With II for south, I know that north is in the direction of VIII, west in the direction of XI, east in the direction of V."

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"But how if your hour hand is on the other half of the dial?" asked Sim. "Say at VIII? Which way do you count for half way toward twelve?"

"Why the shortest way, of course. If the hour hand stood at VIII, south would be in the direction of X. You know, of course, that at noon the sun is in the south. Before noon it is east of south—after noon it is west of south. The only question in every case is how much east or how much west. The thing is perfectly simple. No matter what time it is, point your hour hand toward the sun and south will be just half way between that and twelve. Remember that. It may come in handy some time."

"It might if I owned a watch," said Sim Crane, laughing.

"Maybe you will some day," answered Tom Harrod.

"Where did you learn that trick, Tom?" asked Ike.

"George Rogers Clark taught me how to do it when I was out with him surveying a year or two ago. But now we must be off.

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We can't afford to lose what's left of the afternoon. You'd better keep going till nearly dark. The daylight will last till about eight o'clock. Good bye, we'll meet you at Corn Island unless Col. Clark moves before you get there. If so find out which way he went and follow us in a skiff."

## IV

### THE LEADER OF THE LONG KNIVES

**A** YEAR before the boys thus hurried away from the salt lick George Rogers Clark, then a young man of twenty-five, had conceived the plan of one of the great decisive, empire-building, history-making campaigns of the world. He had since then toiled for a year to get ready for the execution of his plan, and he was not yet ready in any proper sense of the word. That is to say, he had no adequate force with which to make his campaign and he could get no adequate force.

But George Rogers Clark in his own person and by virtue of his genius, his enterprise, his limitless self-confidence, and his gift of controlling men, counted for more than a regiment or a brigade might have done under a less forceful command than

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his own, and so, with the very meagre force at hand, he had resolved to go forward.

Clark was a young Virginian whose education had been fairly good and in addition he had learned a good deal of mathematics and was a good practical land surveyor, just as George Washington had been before he became a great commander. Clark had gone to Kentucky as a boy, and while yet scarcely more than a boy he had become influential there in an extraordinary degree.

He was a man of genius and a born statesman as well as a born military leader. It was he who had discovered the need of organization, coöperation and orderly government among the widely scattered settlers in the Kentucky country. It was he who had journeyed on foot and at great risk to Virginia and induced the authorities there to erect Kentucky into a county with a court empowered at once to administer justice and to regulate public affairs by the exercise of legislative and executive authority.

Then later, when the Revolutionary war came on, and Hamilton's infamous opera-

## LEADER OF THE LONG KNIVES

tions threatened to make a hostile British possession out of all the region that we now know as Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin and Michigan—thus forever shutting the Americans in and forbidding to the Republic all possibility of expansion westward—it was George Rogers Clark alone who clearly understood what this meant. He saw how certainly, when the Revolutionary war should be ended, the British power, securely holding the region north of the Ohio, would proceed to conquer the Kentucky and Tennessee settlements south of the river, and make of the Allegheny mountains a Chinese wall standing in the way of American national growth. Further than that, he foresaw that with the region west of the mountains in their control and in easy communication with Canada, the British might bide their time and consult their convenience, but in the end descend upon the Americans from the rear with irresistible forces and reconquer the young and feeble states to arbitrary British control.

Neither the authorities nor the people east

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of the mountains had grasped this situation, or given any adequate attention to this danger. Neither the statesmen there nor the military commanders—with the exception of Washington—seemed ever to think of the wild country beyond the Alleghenies as of sufficient worth to waste men and means in defending.

Napoleon Bonaparte was a lad of about ten years of age then—a boy in school. But to George Rogers Clark came a truly Napoleonic thought, and he set to work with Napoleonic energy and Napoleonic audacity to carry the thought into action and to make accomplished fact of his dream of conquest.

It was his thought to conquer all the region north of the Ohio, to break the menacing British power there, to seize upon all strategic positions in that country, and to secure the region once for all as an American possession, open to American settlement.

But where were the means to come from with which to carry so great an enterprise to success? There were only a few

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hundred men all told in Kentucky, while Hamilton, at Detroit, at Post Vincennes, at Kaskaskia and at Cahokia had a great multitude of trained soldiers and drilled militiamen and experienced volunteers available, to say nothing of his Indian allies numbering many thousands of fierce warlike savages, all in his pay, all armed and fed by him and all ready to do the most brutal kind of bloody murder at his instigation.

The Revolutionary war was on and the feeble States east of the mountains were sorely beset and put to their own difficult defense at every point. They could spare no army for George Rogers Clark's scheme of conquest.

The Republic was at that time very loosely organized. To speak more accurately, it was not organized at all. There was no central or general government that could levy a tax, enforce a law, or control anybody anywhere. The thirteen revolting States were acting together in a vague, general way, but in the main each was standing by itself, concerning itself chiefly with its own

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defense, and regarding the fate of the others with something like indifference.

When a British force assailed any State, the people of that State rallied and resisted the attack. But when a neighboring State was assailed, there was no authority that could compel the militia to cross their own territorial lines and lend assistance. It was an era of jealous selfishness and segregation.

Clark perfectly understood that there was no national government to which he could appeal for men and means with which to carry out his great, empire-building scheme of conquest and defense. But Virginia claimed the Northwest as a part of her domain, and Kentucky was merely a county of Virginia. So to Virginia he decided to appeal. He set out through the forest, and after a toilsome and very tedious journey he reached the Virginia capital.

There he laid the case before the governor, who happened to be Patrick Henry, the man who had raised the cry of freedom—"Give me liberty or give me death!"

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Governor Henry appreciated the importance of Clark's plan but his means of helping it were very meagre. Virginia was at that time threatened and beset by the British. Her credit had been strained to the point of breaking, and all her fighting men who could be induced to enlist were already in service under Washington, Gates, Light Horse Harry Lee, and Lafayette.

All that Governor Henry could do, therefore, was to sanction George Rogers Clark's plan and to give him permission to enlist in Virginia four companies of fifty men each, if he could persuade so many to join him.

Acting upon this authority, Clark set to work to get his little force together. He dared not tell anybody what he was planning to do, for the reason that news of it might reach Hamilton, at Detroit, and if that should happen, Clark knew that the wily and resentful British commander would immediately send forward a strong military force, composed of regulars, volunteers and trained Indians, to hold securely the strong-

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holds that it was Clark's purpose to conquer, and to drive the Virginians out of Kentucky.

Accordingly, he gave it out that he was enlisting men "for the defense of Kentucky." To many of the young men who were asked to go, this meant a picnic, or something closely akin to that. It meant that they should have a march through the picturesque woodlands to the wonderful Kentucky country, of which they had heard much; that upon arriving there, at the pleasantest time of year, they should be quartered in the comfortable cabins of the settlers, or in the little forts that had been built to defend Harrodsburg and the other settlements of importance.

These were brave men, but they loved their ease and enjoyment, and while they were ready enough to fight Indians from behind stockades, they had not bargained for long and wearisome marches into the Illinois country, there to meet overmatching numbers of British, French and Indians.

Clark took most of his men from Vir-

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ginia to Pittsburg, and thence down the Ohio River in boats. But those of them who had been enlisted "on the Holston,"—that is to say, in Southwestern Virginia—were ordered, as Hawk Camden had explained to the boys, to march across country.

When, at last, Clark reached the Falls of the Ohio, he camped his force upon a little island which lay in the river near the Kentucky shore. This was then, and long afterwards, known as Corn Island, but after the trees were cut from it, the little island gradually washed away, until now no trace of it remains in the river.

The place was ideal for Clark's purpose. It furnished a comfortable camp, and, being an island, it was a spot on which Clark's rather wilful and undisciplined men could be easily kept under control. More important still, it was a camp easy to defend if there should happen to be an Indian foray into the Kentucky country—a thing of frequent occurrence in those days. There was still another advantage in the fact that from Corn Island Clark could easily and

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secretly communicate with every cabin in Kentucky for the double purpose of collecting provisions and drawing volunteers to his service.

There could not be many such volunteers, for the reason that the total population of Kentucky was small, and many of the men and boys included in that population were imperatively needed at home, both to defend their cabins against Indians, and to cultivate their little fields by way of warding off famine. But Clark sorely needed every man he could get of that sturdy, calm-souled, death-daring Kentucky race, and he had reason to expect the enlistment of a few of them, at least, through the secret emissaries he had sent out for that purpose.

His need of such recruits was all the greater because the men of the Holston Company had deserted him, leaving him with considerably less than a hundred and twenty men, all told.

To a spirit less daringly adventurous than his, the situation would have been hopelessly discouraging. To such a man as

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George Rogers Clark, the very discouragement of it was a spur to action. For not one moment did he falter in his great purpose. He meant to go into the Illinois and conquer the strongholds there. He meant to make all that fair region an American possession forever. He meant to break or curb the hostile British power that dwelt there as a menace to Virginia and the new-born Republic struggling for liberty and independence. He had hoped to have three or four hundred men to aid him in his great work. This desertion left him with about a hundred and twenty, whose numbers he hoped to swell to a hundred and fifty, or perhaps a few more, by recruits from the Kentucky settlements. But he had no thought of abandoning the enterprise because of his lack of men and means.

George Rogers Clark was one of the Long Knives, and it was never the habit of the Long Knives to falter in the face of difficulty. Accordingly, as soon as he landed his force on Corn Island, he set to work as hurriedly as possible to prepare for his great

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march. While waiting for his messengers to bring in all the recruits they could secure, he set his men to work repairing the flat boats and loading them with all the provisions he could command. He sent men to scour the country for bacon, dried bear's meat, jerked venison, corn meal, dried beans and hominy. There was little enough of these provisions to be had, and to make good the deficiency, he sent parties of hunters into the Indiana woods, north of the river, to bring in all the game they could kill.

But haste was the main thing. Every hour of delay added to the chance that Hamilton would hear of his proposed movement and send a strong force to defeat it.

## V

### THE REV. ZACCHEUS BONTY

**I**T was a little after dark when Tom Harrod and Hawk Camden reached The Falls. Hawk was in a quiver of apprehension.

"You see," he explained, "Colonel Clark has done give the order to kill all the Holston men what left him, and I'm one of 'em. Ef he takes me back as a soldier, I'm ready to go with him and do my duty up to the handle. But he's mad, you know, Tom, an' jes' as like as not he'll order me shot, 'fore you kin git a chance to put in a word fer me. So you better leave me here, an' you go into the camp an' make arrangements, like, afore I go in."

"Nonsense!" answered Tom. "I know George Rogers Clark, and I'll undertake to arrange for your pardon. He wants

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men too badly to shoot any man who is ready to go with him. Anyhow, you're going with *me*, and I'll answer for it that no harm shall come to you. And what if he *should* shoot you? You deserve it for deserting. And you've got to die some time. Do you expect to live forever?"

Thus urged and compelled, Hawk Camden followed his young leader, and the two crossed to Corn Island in a dugout that Tom found tied to the bank. He didn't know whose dugout it was, but he was not standing upon ceremony just then. So he cast the boat loose, and seizing the single paddle that lay in the stern, pushed the craft across the swift, narrow channel that separated the island from the shore.

The men he encountered upon landing were strangers to him, but he quickly made them understand that he was a personal friend of George Rogers Clark's, and that he wanted to find his way by the shortest possible route to Colonel Clark's bivouac in that bit of woodland.

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"Hello, Tom!" said Clark, raising himself to a sitting posture, after being awakened from sleep. "So you're here, are you? I meant to send for you, but I didn't, because I knew you'd come without any sending. Hungry?"

"No," answered the boy, shaking the commander's hand with the warmth of old friendship. "No, I'm not hungry. I had supper before it grew dark. Of course you knew I'd come. But why didn't you let me know you had got here? I've been waiting for you to come. I might have missed you, and I've got some friends coming, too—some boys that know how to do men's work."

"That's good. But who's your friend?" indicating Hawk Camden.

"One of your Holston men, who wants to return to his duty. I've promised him your pardon if he is faithful hereafter."

"All right. Glad to get him back. What's his name?"

"Hawk Camden."

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“A very good name. Go to one of the camp fires, Hawk, and go to sleep. I want to talk with Tom.”

Tom Harrod and George Rogers Clark were old friends. When Clark, in early youth, first crossed the mountains into Kentucky, he fell in with Tom Harrod's father on the journey, and became, in a sense, a member of the Harrod family. Tom's father afterwards fell by Clark's side in an Indian fight, and from that hour forward, Tom's mother, and Tom himself, became George Rogers Clark's nearest friends. He was a busy man with his surveying and with his Indian fighting, and with his public duties of many kinds, but he found time always to look out for the widow and the children of his dead friend and benefactor.

Tom's mother had been a school teacher in Virginia, and it had been her jealous endeavor to teach Tom to speak good English, instead of the backwoods dialect, and to induce him to read such books as she owned and such as she could borrow from the Baptist ministers, who constituted the “educated

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class" in the Kentucky of that early day. The result was that Tom Harrod spoke better English and had a better education than any other boy in the region round about him, though his mother had taught Ike Todd and Sim Crane to speak good English also. For one thing, Tom knew Gulliver's Travels almost by heart, but in that he was not peculiar, for Swift's romance was the best-known among the stray books that had found their way into Kentucky, and every man, woman and child in that region, even including the many who could not read, but must be read to, knew the stories of Lilliput and Brobdingnag and Laputa and the rest, almost by heart. How this came about, nobody in our modern time has ever been able to find out. But we know, at any rate, and with certainty, that "Gulliver" was read by the firelight in all the cabins of Kentucky, and that its stories were familiar to everybody there.

In addition to the teaching his mother had given him, Tom Harrod had enjoyed the benefit of George Rogers Clark's instruc-

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tion. During the long winter evenings Clark had taught him his arithmetic thoroughly. Then he had taught him algebra, geometry, trigonometry, navigation and surveying, until the boy knew as much of the mathematics—pure and applied—as Clark himself did. Better still, so far as the youth's education was concerned, he had spent many months with George Rogers Clark in the woods, engaged in the actual survey of lands, and that daily association with a man of Clark's character, had been an incalculably valuable educative influence with the backwoods boy.

In the meanwhile, Tom Harrod had grown to the full stature of manhood. He was nearly six feet in height; he weighed about a hundred and seventy pounds; he was muscular beyond the common, lean, sinewy and wonderfully lithe and active. In his mind he was also mature, as the natural and necessary result of his life in the woods, where intellectual alertness and vigor were quite as necessary to self preservation as physical prowess itself.

## THE REV. ZACCHEUS BONTY

Clark's pleasure in Tom's arrival was so great that he instantly abandoned his purpose to sleep. He rose and stirred up the camp fire, throwing half a dozen big sticks of wood upon it, for even in June, as every old soldier knows, the man who spends the night out of doors is apt to find a fire comforting. Besides, Clark wanted to talk with Tom Harrod.

"How is your mother?" he asked. "And how is she going to spare you?"

"Oh, she's all right—and as for sparing me, you know very well she'd have driven me away if I hadn't come here of my own accord. You know mother. She can take care of herself. And there are the girls—Minerva and Mary Jane. They know how to shoot straight, and they aren't afraid. And there are the two younger boys. They can shoot, too, and they wanted to come with me when I told them, before I went to the salt lick, what you are going to do; but I wouldn't let them. Jack is only eleven, and Jim only nine. So I ordered them to stay at home and defend the place, if need be.

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It's a sturdy race that has settled Kentucky and is holding it against long odds."

"Indeed it is," answered Clark, "and the historians and poets will celebrate it some day, as the sturdiest and hardiest and most heroic race of men and women that ever made a country their own. Now, if we have good luck on this expedition, we're going to give the poets and historians something else to write about that is worth while. But tell me about your man, Hawk Camden. Where did you pick him up; and how?"

"At the salt lick. We were there making salt. He came to us in a state of starvation. I found out that he had deserted you, so I gave him his choice of returning to his duty or being turned loose in the woods, stripped to the skin, and unarmed. He was glad enough to come back. Indeed, I think neither he nor the majority of his comrades, ever wanted to desert you. They were over persuaded by a few malcontents."

"Well, I've over persuaded most of the

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malcontents, I reckon. Most of 'em are dead in the woods."

"Tell me," asked Tom, "how many men shall we have when we leave here?"

"It depends on how many can be spared from Kentucky. There can't be many of them, but every man of them counts. We have a hundred and twenty-two, now, counting you and Hawk Camden. We may get enough more to swell our force to a hundred and fifty, or possibly a hundred and seventy-five."

"But you're going, anyhow?" anxiously asked the boy.

"Going? Do you expect the sun to go on rising and setting? Of course I'm going, and I'm going to succeed, too."

"Good!" exclaimed the boy. "I never did believe in men who didn't believe in themselves. How soon are we going to set out?"

"Just as soon as I think all the Kentuckians have come in that can go with us. It'll be a day or two, perhaps."

"That's all right then," said Tom. "My

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friends, Sim Crane and Ike Todd, ought to be here some time to-morrow. I sent them home with the salt we made. I've told 'em to bring along the meat of a big black bear I killed up there at the salt lick, and they'll bring some corn, or some meal, or some hominy. They're good foragers, and they'll bring whatever provisions they can find."

At that moment a tremendously tall old pioneer—six feet-six, at the least—presented himself. He was clad in a homespun wampus, with deerskin breeches, moccasins, and a coonskin cap ornamented with six flowing tails. He carried a long rifle. He had his powder horn slung under his right arm, and his long hunting knife in his belt.

"Evenin', stranger," he said, by way of opening conversation with the young commander. "Mout I inquire if your name's George Rogers Clark?"

"That's my name," Clark answered, smiling. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, you see, I'm Zaccheus Bonty.

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When I'm at home I'm a Hardshell Baptis' preacher, *an'* a farmer. When I'm here I'm a Hardshell Baptis' preacher, *an'* a soldier. Anyhow, you see, I'm one o' them fellers that's gone acrost the river an' took en' up lands on the north side, what they calls Injianny. I don't keer what comes, I'm a goin' to stick to the Injianny side o' the river. Well, now, it's this way. My boys is all gals. They's eleven of 'em, an' every one of 'em is a gal. But they's got the sperrit in 'em, an' so when one o' your deserters he comes to us fer food an' lodg-in', like,—though we was on the north side of the river, an' I didn't know how he got there,—my gals got to questionin' of him, like. An' when they found out as how these men had left you, they taken the deserter to the corn crib an' tied him there an' tole him to eat hard corn for his dinner. He come roun' quick, an' promised to go back with me ef you would take him back, an' now he's done it. I brung him, *shore*.

"Then my gals—all eleven of 'em—besot me to go down to the Falls an' jine you for

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the campaign. An' their mother—she's a woman o' sperrit—she says, says she: 'Zaccheus, I'd ruther be the widder of a brave man than the wife of a coward.' An' so I've come off down here to jine your force, an' they wa'n't no weepin' over me when I left. They's got sperrit, them women folks o' mine. My gals says the corn is in tossel, an' nearly ready to lay by. They says they can do the rest o' the plowin' an' the hoein', an' take keer o' things generally. My wife, she says to me, says she: 'Zaccheus, you're a great preacher, an' a movin' one, an' you're powerful in prayer, but you've got a mighty fine farm over here on the north side o' the river, an' ef you're agoin' to keep it, you've got to help in this here enterprise o' George Rogers Clark's. Ef you don't, the British an' the Frenchmen, an' the Injuns is destined to own all this here neck o' the woods, an' you'll be sent a packin', in spite o' the stone house you've built an' the stone corn crib an' all the rest of it. So it's your turn to fight fer the country north of the river.'

## THE REV. ZACCHEUS BONTY

That's what my women folks said to me, an' you know women folks is always apt to be right, an' even ef they ain't right, they're pretty likely to git their way. So here I am, to help you do any fightin' they is to be done, an' to preach to the men when the sperret moves me."

"Where's your man?" asked Colonel Clark—"the man your girls locked in the corn crib?"

"Oh, he's in the camp, an' I'm kinder lookin' arter him. You see, he's promised to fight without flinchin', an' I reckon he means it, but to make sure, I'll keep him under my eye, like, exhortin' him, like, an' ef worse comes to worst, I'm prepar'd to show him that the Holy Scriptor is true when it says 'the way of the transgressor is hard.' You jest let him trangress agin an' I'll fulfill the prophecy myself by makin' it everlastin'ly hard for him. He'll stick now, an' he'll fight when the time comes. I'll answer fer that. I'm said to be powerful in wrastlin' with the Lord, but I'm pur-

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ty powerful in wrastlin' with a sinner also an' likewise, an' I'll take keer o' this here job."

"I think you will," answered Colonel Clark. "At any rate, I'll leave the matter to you. Good night. It's very late."

It was ten o'clock in the evening, but to the early-rising, hard-working men of the West, ten o'clock was all of an hour late for bedtime. They could tramp all night, if need be, or hunt all night, or fight all night. But when there was nothing of such strenuous sort to do, they saw no reason for keeping much later hours than the chickens do.

## VI

### CLARK AND HIS MEN

ON the next day but one, Tom Harrod's friends, Ike Todd and Sim Crane, arrived at the camp, bringing with them two or three other boys and one elderly man, who explained his coming by saying that his wife had just died, and as all his sons and daughters were married and settled, he didn't see what better use he could make of his time than by "jinin' the force."

A few other Kentuckians also joined, so that the total force at Corn Island at last reached about one hundred and fifty in number. It was utterly inadequate, or it seemed so, to the accomplishment of the work it was set to do. But there were two factors in the problem that went far to change its conditions and its chances. One of these was the character of the men. The

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other was the character and genius of George Rogers Clark.

The men were, almost without exception, native Virginians, if we include Kentucky in Virginia, as was then the case. As such they had inherited courage, hardihood and unflinching manliness as birthrights and unalterable characteristics. They were the sons and grandsons and great-grandsons of men and women who had cheerfully abandoned lives of ease in England or Ireland or Scotland and had come out to conquer a wilderness in utter disregard of danger and hardship and privation. Through two or three, and sometimes even four generations, these men and boys had been bred to endurance and daring until it had become an instinct with them to love danger for its own sake, to welcome privation as a thing to sharpen their wits upon, and to regard difficulty, however great it might be, as a mere condition of an intricate and interesting game which they were set to play—the stakes being life and death.

They were very young men, for the most

## CLARK AND HIS MEN

part. Many of them were mere boys indeed, but in those days and in that region boys ripened very early into manhood. They were all of them tall—for in that time and country both men and women seemed to have borrowed the thought of height from the trees of the forests in which they lived or from the giant corn stalks their fertile fields produced.

They were gaunt of form and thin of feature, as a result, probably, of their diet. They were meat eaters. They ate bread—mostly made of corn meal—when they could get it, but often they could not get it. They ate such vegetables as they had, when they were at home, but often they lived for weeks and even for months alone in the woods, where their only food was the flesh of game animals and their only drink the water they found in springs and brooks and larger streams.

Even when these men were nominally at home they often spent days and even weeks in the woods round about their cabins, killing game and loading themselves with pelts.

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Often their love of wandering led them upon longer excursions, enduring for months. Some of them had made hunting trips to points as distant as Louisiana.

These long hunting trips were usually made absolutely alone. Sometimes two or three of the "long hunters," as they were called, would meet in the woods and fraternize for a day or two over a camp fire, but usually they preferred to be alone.

They had the habit of solitude, therefore, with all of silence and self-reliance that that habit breeds in men. Often, even when two or more of them bivouacked together in the woods, they would sit silent for hours, not because of surliness, for they were not surly, but because they were unaccustomed to talk and they felt no need of conversation. And after a night together they were likely to separate in the morning without a word of explanation or of farewell, each going his chosen way, and each depending solely upon himself and his trusty rifle—feeling no need of other company or assistance.

There were other reasons for their lean

## CLARK AND HIS MEN

muscularily, besides their diet. For one thing, they slept out of doors far more frequently than in doors. For another, they were ceaselessly active in ways that tended to reduce flesh. For still another, their minds were always alertly strained in the search for elusive game, or in avoiding or meeting danger. Men who must think alertly at every moment of every day do not accumulate fat.

They were shrewd men, of course, and men of courage and resource. Otherwise they would not have been alive. Danger was their daily companion, and self-reliance was the fundamental fact of their being.

In command of them on this expedition there was George Rogers Clark, a man of their own kind but superior to them in all that goes to make up commanding character and ability. He came before Napoleon, but it is impossible for any student of his character and career to avoid a comparison between him and Napoleon—a comparison from which George Rogers Clark in no wise suffers.

The influence that Clark had secured in

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Kentucky was as overmastering as it was strange. He had gone out there a mere boy of twenty, yet four or five years later he was the recognized leader of all the Kentuckians, though at that time Daniel Boone, Simon Kenton and other such men were there. He was the originator of the statesmanship which gave orderly self-government to Kentucky. He was recognized as the most skilful and most daring Indian fighter of his time. His counsel was sought not only as to affairs of public concern, but also as to personal matters of every kind. In both cases what he advised was done quite as a matter of course. All the people believed in him—in his wisdom, his courage, his extraordinary sagacity and the relentlessness of his determination.

There was no orderly encampment there on Corn Island. George Rogers Clark's men were soldiers for fighting purposes only. He imposed upon them none of the more formal and dandyish duties of the soldier. They wore their homespun jeans clothing. They built their camp fires

## CLARK AND HIS MEN

wherever they pleased. There were no formal guard-mountings, no parades, no fuss and feathers of any kind. But every man in that camp knew that the command of their young colonel was law, even in cases of life and death.

The force was very meagerly equipped. There were no tents. Why should men like these want a cotton cloth sheltering to sleep under—men who all their lives had been used to sleep in the woods wherever night might overtake them, with no concern whatever for the vagaries of the weather?

We have already seen how Col. Clark secured his supplies of food, by sending out hunting parties to kill game. He very jealously guarded his small stock of bacon as a reserve supply that must be kept against a time of need, when there might be no game at command.

At Corn Island the men drew upon the river as well as upon the forest. They put out "trot lines" every night, and feasted next day upon the gigantic catfish and the great perch with which

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western waters abounded in those days. The catfish often weighed as high as fifty or seventy-five pounds, while once in a while, even as late as the middle of the nineteenth century, catfish were caught in that river, weighing a hundred and sometimes a hundred and fifty pounds. The perch ranged in size from ten to twenty-five pounds.

The river was full of these fish, and it was not difficult to catch them with trot lines. A trot line was a stout and very long line—ordinarily from a hundred to three or four hundred feet in length with a heavy stone attached to its outer end. Along the line at intervals of eight or ten feet there were fastened to the line what were called “stagings.” These were short lines,—two or three feet in length—with large hooks at the end, but with no sinkers. When these hooks were baited, usually with crawfish, the land end of the trot line was made fast to a secure stake or tree at the edge of the water. Then the free end was carried out in a boat and the stone dropped into the river. In the morning the fisherman, with some one to

## CLARK AND HIS MEN

row, would go out in the boat lifting the line as he went, taking off the fish that had hooked themselves, baiting the hooks anew, and replacing the trot line in the water. Sometimes three or four fish would be caught on a single line during the night, and it was a rare occurrence to find a line with none on it when morning came.

The men enjoyed the sport as well as the fish, but this was not destined to last long. Col. Clark was in an eager hurry to be off on his expedition, and as soon as he had drawn to himself all the volunteers he could hope to secure in Kentucky, he set the force in motion down the river.

## VII

### PARSON BONTY'S SERMON

**B**Y the 24th of June, 1778, everything was ready. The rude flatboats that were to carry the force down the river were loaded with such things as Col. Clark meant to take with him. These consisted almost entirely of food supplies and ammunition. There was little, if any, baggage—what did these wild woodsmen of Virginia and Kentucky care for baggage that would only encumber them on the march? They had their hunting shirts on their backs, their trousers, made of buckskin or of stout, home-woven jeans, on their legs, coonskin caps for headgear, and high boots, made of raw hide, which would actually outwear iron. With their rifles, powder horns, bullet pouches, a few spare flints in their pockets, and their long hunting knives in their

## PARSON BONTY'S SERMON

belts, they felt themselves equipped for anything and everything. If they had been burdened with other possessions of any kind they would pretty certainly have thrown them away.

When all was ready Col. Clark quietly ordered the men to go aboard the boats. He had already assigned to each of the boats the men it was to carry. He was too far-sighted, too orderly in his ways, to leave any detail to chance or to last-moment arrangement.

The men marched aboard so quietly that if an enemy had been on the near-by shore and not looking, he would not have discovered the fact. They were pioneers, backwoodsmen, accustomed to shout at the top of their voices on all occasions, and they were so enthusiastic over this beginning of the work they were set to do, that if left to themselves they would have made the woodlands for miles around echo to their hurrahs. But Clark had sternly enjoined silence, threatening severe punishment to any man who should whoop or halloo. There was al-

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ways danger that British or Indian scouts might be within hearing and Clark was determined that his start down the river should be concealed from any such, as far as possible. In order to make sure that there were no spies within sight of the boats he had sent out Tom Harrod and half a dozen other men the night before to go silently through the woods on either side of the river and search them thoroughly.

But though these scouts reported that there were certainly no spies within seeing distance, there might be some such within hearing of such a tumult as these men would have made if left to their own impulses. Hence the necessity of ordering absolute silence.

When the boats were cast off and the great sweeps, or oars, were manned, the men wondered at the next order Clark gave, which was to row up stream instead of down. They had not studied the Falls as Clark had, and they did not understand that it was necessary to take the boats for a full mile up stream in order to swing them into

## PARSON BONTY'S SERMON

the swirling, boiling, turbulent channel that led over the Falls. Those Falls were in fact not falls at all in the strict sense of the term. They were simply a steep, rocky rapids, four or five miles long, over which the waters of the great river surged with turbulent violence. In times of low water no boat could possibly pass over these rapids. It would have been beaten to bits upon the rocks. In times of very high water the Falls presented no particular difficulty, though even then the voyage over them was likely to shake a boat up a good deal. In times of moderately high water, such as prevailed when this expedition started, a flat-boat could pass the Falls in safety, but to do so required a great deal of circumspection. The boat must be kept in the channel if it hoped to escape wreck, and the channel was both narrow and very crooked, with threatening rocks on either hand, while the current was so rapid that it was very difficult to keep a boat from being driven off at a tangent at every turn.

Since that time the Government has done

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much to render the passage easier and safer. Besides digging a steamboat canal around the Falls, it has blasted out the worst of the rocks. But in George Rogers Clark's time the Falls were as Nature had made them and Col. Clark had to brave all their dangers and use all his ingenuity in meeting the difficulties.

For one thing he lashed all his flatboats together, side by side and end to end, so that in case of accident the uninjured ones might support the others and keep them afloat, and so also that he might at all times have his entire force at hand for any work that an emergency might call for.

Thus lashed securely together the oars were stopped and the fleet was left to float over the surging currents of the Falls.

The great sweeps used on flatboats were a species of oars never used on any other kind of craft in the world, and Clark stationed six or eight, or sometimes ten, men at each of these sweeps, so that the flotilla might be saved from wreck by vigorous rowing in case of necessity. Until such emer-

## PARSON BONTY'S SERMON

gency should arise there was to be no rowing whatever. The current was to do the necessary work of driving the fleet through the great sluiceway. But should danger arise Col. Clark wished to be ready for it. So he put a man in whom he reposed special confidence at each of the sweeps, with authority to command the others there. Then he stationed himself on an elevated platform hastily constructed for the purpose of permitting him to see not only the whole fleet but the entire expanse of the river.

No mishap of any kind occurred during the passage, but something else did happen, and it meant more to the men of the expedition than any mere accident could have done.

Just as the boats left their moorings at Corn Island, although the sky was perfectly clear, there came a slight, but rapidly increasing darkening of the sunlight. It was not as if a cloud had obscured the sun, but as if the sun itself were slowly going out. One after another the men looked up, to see what the matter might be, and, after a little while, the light had so far decreased that

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they were able to take frequent glances at the sun itself.

Apparently a great bite had been taken out of the disc, and every time they looked the black segment was larger than it had been before. By the time that the passage of the Falls was made more than one-half the face of the sun was obscured, and while there was not a cloud in the sky the day had become as dark as an early morning in mid winter when a rainstorm is on. Worse still, the darkness was increasing and it continued to do so until those who looked at the sun saw nothing more than a slender crescent-shaped thread of light, like that which the new moon presents. In brief, a great solar eclipse was on, and it was very nearly total.

The men were superstitious and this darkening of the sun just at the moment of the expedition's beginning, filled them with alarm as a portent of evil. Rumors of this fear spread rapidly among the men, threatening demoralization, until, as smooth and quiet water below the Falls was reached,

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Zaccheus Bonty went to Col. Clark and said:

"I'll preach to 'em, Colonel, ef you'll let me, an' I'll give 'em a sermon that'll stiffen up their back bones an' make men of 'em agin."

"Do it!" cried Clark, as the closely lashed flatboats began floating quietly down the river. "Brace 'em up. I don't know anything about your religion or your superstition, or your doctrine or whatever it is, but I know what eclipses are and what they mean and how they happen. But I couldn't explain such things to such men so as to make them understand. If you've got anything in your saddlebags that'll quiet their fears give it to 'em."

In answer to Clark's hurried summons, all the men on board the boats assembled, and the Rev. Zaccheus Bonty proceeded to preach to them in this fashion:

"Men an' brethren—friends an' feller sinners: Ef you've read your Bibles half or a quarter as much as you ort to, you're acquainted with the words of my tex' which

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occurs frequently in the pages of Holy Writ. Its words is 'WHICH BEIN' INTERPRETED.' Wherever you run up agin them there words in the Scriptur' you find yourself in a hole like a hogwaller o' misunderstandin', but after them blessed words is read, you come to the explanation an' then things grows lighter an' lighter, jes' as they're a doin' now ef you're a noticin'. Ef you'll look up to heaven as sinners ort to do, you'll see that the big bite what was took out'n the sun is a gotten to be a littler an' a littler bite every minute. The light's a increasin' all the time, for which let us give thanks jes' as we give thanks when they's plenty o' beech nuts in the wods to fatten the hogs on, an' jes, as we does when we're a holdin' of revival meetin's an' some brother's spirit is moved to make him contribute two gallons o' whiskey to the cause instid o' the three quarts he fust figgered on as his share.

"But I'm a wanderin' away from my text, the words o' which is '*Which Bein' Interpreted.*' Now ef you've read your Bibles

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as you'd ort to, you've noticed that every thing that come before them words o' Holy Writ was a dark an' gruesome mystery till them blessed words come an' arter 'em the explanation.

"So it is on this occasion. When us fellers started out, the sun begun to quit like, an' to your carnal minds it meant that we was a runnin' ourselves into a rabbit trap. Some o' you thought it meant we was agoin' to be beat out'n our boots in this here expedition. Didn't you now?"

There was a murmur of assent which closely approached unanimity.

"Well, that was because the soul-comfartin' words '*Which bein' interpreted,*' hadn't come yet. As an anointed minister o' the gospel I bring you them encouragin' words. I'm a goin' to interpret the peculiar doin's o' the sun this day an' tell you what they mean. It's the same thing what was meant when Joshua of old commanded the sun to stand still over Gibeon an' the moon to be as quiet as it could make up its mind to be over the valley of Ajalon while

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he licked the life out'n his enemies. Of course we don't understand how the sun an' the moon come to be a shinin' at the same time in that there neck o' the woods, but that's one o' the mysteries that makes religion precious. Anyhow, we've got the application to-day. As soon as we started out with Col. Clark to lick the Britishers an' the Frenchmen an' the Injuns, the sun went out, jest to encourage us, like. It meant we was a goin' to blot 'em all out, an' ef we don't do it it'll be because we're unfaithful servants of the Lord. Now let us sing the doxology an' git to work at the oars!"

The men cheered, and went to their work with a will. They knew nothing definitely of their commander's plans or purposes, but they were there to carry them out, whatever they might be. They did not know how far down the river he intended to go before debarking his force, but they were quick to understand that whatever his destination might be he wanted to get there as soon as possible. So they plied the great sweeps vigorously by way of pushing the boats

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down the river at a speed about twice that of the current in which they were floating.

And as the eclipse passed away and the June sunlight came back their spirits revived and their souls were filled with cheer again.

## VIII

### THREE MEN IN A BOAT

**N**OT long after Parson Bonty's sermon was finished Colonel Clark ordered the flatboats unlashed—that is to say, cast loose from each other.

He had several reasons for ordering this change. The channel of the Ohio, even at a fairly high stage of water, is in many places narrow and crooked and the flatboats, floating separately, might be more easily steered through the narrow reaches and around bends. For another thing, Clark thought his men were less apt to become discontented if they were separated on different boats and kept busy than if they were all assembled upon a lashed fleet where they could gather together and talk over their hardships, their woes and the dangers

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into which their reckless commander was leading them.

For George Rogers Clark knew that his men would regard his enterprise as a madcap expedition if once, by consultation, they should come to understand it. In very fact it was a madcap expedition, but madcap expeditions in war often achieve their ends and make history in very important ways. Anthony Wayne's assault upon Stony Point was so clearly a madcap expedition that it won for him the nickname of "Mad Anthony." All the raids of Marion and Sumter and Pickens, in the partisan warfare in the South during the revolution were madcap performances. So later was Andrew Jackson's night assault upon Pakenham's regulars below New Orleans, with a little band of ragamuffins. But in these and a hundred other cases the madcap expedition completely achieved its purpose, and it was in hope of doing that that Col. Clark had undertaken his present enterprise.

Still another reason for separating the flatboats and letting each float independ-

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ently of the others was that greater speed could be made in that way. So long as the boats were lashed together in a column of couples only half the sweeps—those on the outer sides—could be used, and George Rogers Clark was in a hurry. Casting the boats loose, he could have all the sweeps on each of them double manned both by night and by day, and in that way he could make about twice as many miles a day as the mere current could give. Fortunately he had men enough on each boat to keep the oars double-manned all the time, so that his progress down the river was rapid and ceaseless.

When the boats were separated, Clark took the lead with one of them, ordering the others to follow at a safe distance. When the boats were thus brought into a proper column, each separated from the others by the space of a quarter of a mile or a little more, Clark called Tom Harrod aside and asked him:

“Do you know your friends Sim Crane and Ike Todd? Can you trust them? Will they keep still? Or will they talk?”

## THREE MEN IN A BOAT

"I can trust them, and so can you," was all that the boy thought it necessary to answer.

"Very well, then. Launch one of the skiffs and have them get into it with you and me. Put in two pairs of oars."

Ten minutes later George Rogers Clark, Tom Harrod, Ike Todd and Sim Crane cast the skiff loose and slowly rowed about inspecting the column of flatboats, while Clark gave a brief order to the captain of each, as to the distance he was to maintain from the boat next ahead of him, as to what he was to do in case of fog, and as to such other things as the young commander could foresee as possible. Especially he cautioned all of them that in the event of an attack they were to run their boats alongside his own in order that they might make a united resistance.

When all his orders were given, the commander bade the boys row slowly at a goodly distance from the flatboats, as he had something of importance to say to them.

"Sometime to-morrow," he said, "I'm go-

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ing to send you three forward in the biggest skiff we've got, to pick out a place where I can hide the flatboats securely while making the march inland. It must be in some heavily wooded cove, or creek mouth, or somewhere else where the boats can be so hidden as not to be seen either from the river or from the shore."

"Somewhere near the mouth of the Wabash?" Tom Harrod questioned.

"No," answered Clark.

"Then somewhere this side of that?"

"No. Why did you think so?"

"Because that would give us the shortest march to Post Vincennes."

"But we aren't going to Post Vincennes," Col. Clark answered. "At least, not for the present."

"Then where are we going? No, I take that back. I hadn't any business to ask it. I mean where are we to hunt for a hiding place for the flatboats?"

"Somewhere near the mouth of the Tennessee River," answered the young commander. "You're right, Tom, in saying

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you had no business to ask where we are going, but at the same time I'm going to tell you because I shall have to depend a good deal on you and your two friends here for very delicate and confidential service now and then, and you can serve me all the better if you know what I am planning to do. But you are none of you to say a word of what I tell you—now and hereafter."

"Not a word or a whisper," answered Tom, the others assenting.

"Very well, then. Let me explain. You assumed that I would begin by assailing Post Vincennes because it is the most commanding of the British posts; because it is the one nearest me; and finally because it is the one nearest Pittsburg, which of course is our base of operations and supplies, though Pittsburg is so far away that it doesn't need to count for much. Now if the enemy should get wind of our movement in any way—and he may, you know, through some French hunter or trapper or some Indian scout—he will argue the thing out just as you have done. He'll say to

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himself, 'The Long Knives are moving to attack Post Vincennes,' and so he will send every man to Post Vincennes that he can spare. So I am not going to assail Post Vincennes—for the present, at least. I am going to march against Kaskaskia and Cahokia instead. If I can capture them I'll think about Post Vincennes afterwards.

"Besides, there's another reason. The British have won all the Frenchmen and all the half-breeds and all the Indians to their side. So, no matter where we strike, we shall be outnumbered three or four or five to one, by an enemy in entrenchments and possessed of abundant cannon. Our only chance of success lies in surprise. They may be looking for us at Post Vincennes. Probably they will be. But they won't be looking for us at Kaskaskia, and it is my plan either to slip in there without warning and make myself master of the situation before they dream of my coming, or, if I can't do that, to fall upon them suddenly with an Indian war whoop and run over them before they have time to guess what our numbers

## THREE MEN IN A BOAT

are. Then there's another thing. Kaskaskia lies very near the Mississippi river. So does Cahokia. If we should find ourselves overmatched and beaten there, we could cross the Mississippi and be safe, for all the region on the other side of the river is Spanish territory, you know. Now not a word of all this to any human being, you understand."

"We know how to keep our mouths shut," answered Tom, "and you can trust us."

"I know that," said Clark. "Now to-morrow morning, or better still, to-night, I want you to set out. Chuck a few pieces of meat into the skiff for you won't have time to go ashore for game. Take two pairs of oars, so that one of you may sleep while the others row. You'll need to get forty or fifty miles ahead of the flatboats, and I'm going to push them all I can with the sweeps. So you'll have to hustle. When you get down there near the mouth of the Tennessee, hunt up the best hiding-place you can find for the boats, and then keep a sharp lookout up the river till you see us

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coming. On the whole I reckon you'd better set out at once. You won't have any time to spare." Clark did not think they would talk indiscreetly, but by sending them away at once he gave them no chance to talk at all.

Accordingly the three boys, supplying themselves with a quarter of venison and nothing else—pushed their skiff clear of the leading flatboat about half an hour later, and rapidly rowed down the river.

## IX

### A RATHER BAD NIGHT

**T**OM HARROD always wanted to discharge every duty in the best and fullest manner he could. So on this occasion he hurried down the river with all the speed he could make in order that he might have ample time to find the best hiding-place for the flatboats before they should arrive.

He arranged that two of the three should row, the third taking a place at the oars and relieving one of the others at stated intervals. In this way sleep would be possible to all of them without delaying their progress in the least.

The light skiff, propelled by two pairs of oars in the hands of muscular young fellows, soon left the lumbering flatboats far behind and at the next bend in the river the three

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boys lost sight of them altogether. A few hours later night came on and a haze from the marshes and wooded shores rendered the weather what seamen call "thick," but Tom's orders were to push on night and day, and he would have done that even without any orders at all. He could still see fifty yards ahead of him, and as there were no steamboats in those days, he had no fear of being run over.

Now even on the clearest night—even in broad daylight, in fact,—it is not an easy matter for one who doesn't know the channel and the shores to find his way down a river like the Ohio. He comes to places where what looks like the broad river straight ahead, is not the river at all, but a deep bay opening directly in front, while the river has suddenly narrowed and turned off almost at a right angle to the right or left.

As the night grew older, the air became thicker and thicker, but Tom and his companions could still see river ahead, and they continued to ply their oars with all their might.

## A RATHER BAD NIGHT

"I reckon we won't try for any naps to-night, boys," said Tom, as he sat in the stern straining his eyes to see the river ahead or the shore on the side nearest the boat,—for it was impossible to see even the forests for more than half way across the stream. Thus when one shore could be dimly made out, the other was completely lost to sight. "The one who isn't rowing will be needed as a lookout all the time."

"Well, if you can stand it, we oughtn't to complain," answered Sim Crane, "seeing that you were out all last night scouring the woods for spies while we were sound asleep."

Tom made no answer. He was much too busy studying the shore to concern himself with anything else. So the boat shot forward in silence.

Presently Tom called out to the boys to "back water." When the headway had been stopped, he stood up, and scanned the shore very closely. It was only a few yards distant on his right hand and still closer right ahead, while on the left he could barely

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make it out. Presently he bade the boys row slowly and directed their course along the shore that had suddenly appeared just ahead. He thought he had come to a bend in the stream toward the left. But after he had explored for perhaps a quarter of a mile or a little more in that direction he discovered what the trouble was.

"We're clear out of the river, boys, and have run into a pocket," he said anxiously. "And the worst of it is I don't know how far back it was that we ran out of the river or how deep the pocket is."

The boys began to talk of the situation, but he silenced them.

"Hush. Let me think," he said.

After several minutes of thinking he spoke again:

"The river lies over there to the right. The trouble is that I don't know how far away it is or how far back we must go to get out of this pocket and into the main stream again."

"How do you know it lies over to the

## A RATHER BAD NIGHT

right?" asked Ike. "Why mayn't it be just the other way?"

"Because when night was coming on we were running along the Kentucky shore, and ever since then that shore has been within sight. So this pocket lies in Kentucky, and the river lies north of it over there to the right. This bay is separated from the main river by a spit or peninsula, and we don't know how long that peninsula is or how wide it is. Run the boat ashore over there."

By this time the fog was so dense that it was difficult to see even a dozen yards ahead, but the boys managed to find a bit of sloping, sandy beach on which they landed.

"Draw the skiff well up on shore, boys, and then build a rip roaring brush fire, so that I'll know where to find you when I come back."

"Why, where are you going?" asked one.

"Hunting," he replied. "Hunting for the Ohio River. You see if I find it isn't too far away across country—that is to say,

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if this spit isn't too wide—we'll drag the skiff across and put her into the river again, instead of going back to find the mouth of the pocket."

"But Tom," Ike called out as the tall boy strode away into the cottonwood grove, "how can you find your way in such a fog as this? You'll get lost, sure."

"There are the stars to steer by," he called back; "they are old friends of mine."

The boys looked up.

"Sure enough," said Sim, looking up; "this fog lies close to the ground and the skies above are clear. Tom knows the stars, or lots of them at least, and he knows how to steer himself by them. He learned all that when he was out surveying. He can tell one star from another as easy as he tells you from me. To me they all look alike except that some are brighter than others."

"Well, this isn't building a fire as Tom told us to do," said Ike.

With that the two set to work with flint, steel and punk, to start the fire. When

## A RATHER BAD NIGHT

they got it blazing they gathered dry brush and driftwood and piled them high to make a huge beacon.

"After all, what's the use of all this?" asked Sim, presently. "He can't see the fire fifty yards away through this fog."

"No, of course not," answered Ike, "but the fire illuminates the fog all around it, making a great white spot in it, and he can see that."

"I didn't think of that."

Tom was gone nearly an hour. When he returned at last the only question the boys asked was:

"Well, what luck?"

"Oh, I found the river," he replied, sitting down with an air of weariness.

"Well, how far away is it?"

"A little less than a mile, I should say, and the underbrush isn't very heavy. Make some torches, as quick as you can, and we'll drag the boat across. She's very light and there are three of us. Make at least a dozen torches. We'll burn

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one or two at a time and take the rest in the boat, lighting a new one whenever an old one burns out."

With that the tired boy, who had had no sleep the night before, stretched himself on his back on the sand, saying as he did so:

"Boys, the chances are I'll fall asleep. If I do, you must wake me the moment the torches are ready and you must hurry them all you can. We've no time to lose."

It did not take the boys long to make the torches, so that Tom got scarcely more than a cat nap. The boys hated to wake him, but he had ordered them to do so, and moreover, they knew as well as he did the necessity of haste in getting their skiff back into the river again. The fog might lift at any moment, and, if it should do so before their task was finished, there would be a grievous waste of time.

Lighting two of the torches the three stalwart fellows quickly drew the skiff up to the level ground. After that the going was comparatively easy, as the boat was a light, flat-bottomed thing, built of thin boards,

## A RATHER BAD NIGHT

and the grass and weeds that had grown up on the spit gave what Ike called "good sledging." Now and then they had to go around a clump of small cottonwood trees, but they continued to make good progress, Tom guiding them by the stars.

When they reached the river the fog was thicker than ever.

"We'll rest here," said Tom, "till the fog either lifts and blows away, or comes down in the form of rain. I've noticed that a fog always does one or the other."

"But why not push off into the river and float?" asked Sim Crane.

"Because we can't tell into what sort of difficulty we might get if we did that. No, our best plan is to stay right where we are till we can see what we are doing and which way we are going. We'll get a little sleep, too," said the well nigh exhausted boy, stretching himself at full length upon the sandy shore and falling asleep almost immediately.

Ike and Sim tried to follow his example, but without much success. They did in-

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deed lie down, and perhaps they got as far toward sleep as a doze, but that quickly came to an end, and both of them sat up, rubbing their faces and scratching their hands.

"Whew!" said Ike. "These mosquitoes are as thick as a swarm of bees."

"Yes, and they seem to be specially hungry. I don't see how Tom manages to stay asleep, only that he was out in the woods all last night and is tired. For my part I'm going to sit up and slap my own jaws for the rest of the night."

"I know a trick worth two of that," answered Ike. "I noticed a patch of pennyroyal just up there on the bank. I'm going to make myself a bouquet of it and brush them off with that."

"That's a good idea. Mosquitoes hate pennyroyal, and I hate mosquitoes. So it's an even thing all round. Tell you what, Ike, we'll sit by Tom and give his mosquitoes a swipe now and then, so he won't be bloated up with their bites in the morning."

## A RATHER BAD NIGHT

The hours of the night seemed very long as the two sat there in silence, lest they should wake their comrade. Their penny-royal brushes gave them great relief, but their hands and faces were still tortured by the bites they had received while trying to sleep, and now, in spite of themselves, they kept dozing off every little while. Whenever they did so the mosquitoes took advantage of the opportunity and assailed them in swarms.

Toward morning, or rather just as morning came and the fog began to turn gray, Sim called out:

“Hello! what’s that?” holding out his hand. “It’s beginning to rain, and if that keeps up we’ll be free to cut out from here in half an hour.”

“Less than that,” said Tom, whom the first few drops had waked. “It’ll be pouring down in torrents presently, and no fog can stand that for long.”

Even as he spoke the drizzle changed suddenly to a downpour, and within two or three minutes the fog was so far gone that

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the woodlands on the opposite shore could be dimly seen.

"Now, shove her off, and jump in. We must get away from here quick," Tom commanded. The boys obeyed, and soon the skiff was in the channel and gliding down stream at a rapid rate, for the current at that point was very swift.

Tom had taken Ike Todd's oars and directed Ike to curl himself up on the bottom of the boat and take a nap. Ike tried to do so, but without much success. In the first place, he wanted to talk matters over, so that he didn't feel sleepy. More important still, the rain, which was coming down in torrents now, soon covered the flat bottom of the boat with two or three inches of water, and it really isn't easy to go to sleep while sitting in two or three inches of water, even when one is already drenched to the skin by the rain.

So, presently Ike sat up in the stern sheets and began asking the questions that were troubling his mind.

## A RATHER BAD NIGHT

"Do you suppose we can catch up with the flatboats and then get far enough ahead of 'em to do what we're sent to do before they get there?"

"'Catch up'? Why, what are you talking about, Ike?" answered Tom. "You know the flatboats are behind us."

"Why, don't you suppose they passed us during the night we've wasted? I should think they would."

"Do you think Colonel Clark has lost his senses? Of course he isn't idiot enough to keep them going in such a fog as that. You may be sure that when it came on he either ran the boats to the shore and tied them up, or else anchored them wherever he was at the time. We must have been fifteen or twenty miles ahead of them when that happened, so we're fifteen or twenty miles ahead of them now. They lost just as much time as we did."

"I didn't think of that," said Ike, taking off his hunting shirt and wringing the water out of the thick woolen cloth.

## LONG KNIVES

“Pull for the shore, Sim, and we must be a little bit quick about it, too, or we’ll capsize.”

Both the other boys saw at once what Tom meant. The boat was by this time nearly half full of water, and shallow thing that she was, every stroke of the oars caused the water in her to “wabble” to one side and then to the other, in a way that threatened to turn the frail skiff bottom-upward. The boys had nothing to bail with, so that it was necessary to run ashore, drag the skiff out on the sand and pour the water out. They had to do this several times before the rain ceased, about noonday. But these stops took very little time, and between times, the skiff was going down the river very rapidly.

“We can make four or five miles to their one,” said Tom, in answer to one of Ike’s troubled questions. “We’ll have to wait for them down there for a day or two, at the least.”

With that Ike was satisfied, and, protesting that he felt chilly in his water-soaked

## A RATHER BAD NIGHT

clothes, he relieved Sim at the oars, "just to warm up," he said. Sim, who wasn't much given to troubling about things that he couldn't help, at once fell asleep.

## X

### A DISCOVERY AND A CAPTURE

**W**HEN the rain ceased, a light westerly breeze sprang up, and the sun came out clear and strong. The heat was intense, in spite of the breeze. The boys removed their boots and emptied the water out of them. Then they wrung their socks, hunting shirts and trousers as dry as they could. When they dressed again they did not put on their hunting shirts, but spread them out to dry, and for the rest of the sunny hours they rowed stripped to the waist, because of the heat.

After a long period of silence, Ike, who was again at the oars while Sim rested, put a question to Tom.

"How far is it to the mouth of the Tennessee, Tom?"

"Well, from the Falls to that point,"

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Tom answered, "it is about a hundred miles in a straight line; but following the course of the river, which bends about every which way, I reckon the distance is more than twice that."

"Then it will take us four or five days to make it."

"Not at all. We'll do it in two days, or maybe a little more, or less."

"But we can't row a hundred miles in a day."

"Yes, we can, with the current to help us. You see, the river runs at the rate of three or four miles an hour, and that of itself will take us down stream about seventy-five or eighty miles every twenty-four hours. The oars will do the rest."

There were no more mishaps, and choosing the swiftest water at all times, Tom hurried on with all speed, never stopping for a moment by night or by day, and so—rather sooner than he expected—he found himself at his destination, the point at which the Tennessee empties into the Ohio—the

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point at which the city of Paducah now stands. It was a wilderness then.

It was mid afternoon when the boys arrived, but without stopping to cook a part of their raw meat, or to do anything else for their own comfort, they at once began exploring both sides of the river in search of a secure hiding place for the flatboats.

Of course, the flatboats could not be rowed up the river again—they were too clumsy for that—but, with his extraordinary foresight, George Rogers Clark had planned to reserve them as a means of retreat in quite another direction. He wished to hide them securely, so that if he should be defeated he could fall back to the Ohio, board his boats, and float down the Ohio to its mouth, fifty miles away, and down the Mississippi to some secure point in Western Kentucky or Tennessee, whence he could march his force home again, overland.

After several hours of exploration, the boys found an island—twenty-five acres, or a little more, in area—lying in the Ohio

## A DISCOVERY AND A CAPTURE

River, just off the mouth of the Tennessee. It was densely wooded and heavily overgrown with an almost impenetrable tangle of bushes, vines and cane. On the southern side of the island—the side facing the Kentucky shore—Tom found a deep bay, or pocket, extending well into the land, and completely screened from view. Here he decided, the flatboats should be hidden.

Having accomplished this, he established his own bivouac on the upper end of the island, at a point from which he could see at least six miles up the river. He could thus await the coming of the flatboats and go to meet them in ample time.

But meanwhile, Tom and his companions explored both shores of the river, and in doing so, they found something else besides the harbor they had come to seek for the flatboats.

On the northern shore of the river they found five dugouts—canoes made by shaping logs and hollowing them out into the semblance of boats.

These dugouts were not in the water,

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but had been carefully drawn into a dense thicket and hidden there among the bushes.

“Five dugouts!” said Tom, carefully studying the “find.” “That means about fifteen or twenty men. They’re on the north shore. That means that the fifteen or twenty men are somewhere north of the river. The dugouts haven’t been out of the water for more than a week or two, judging by appearances. I say, fellows, this may mean mischief, or it may mean just the other thing. It may mean an enemy, or it may mean a reinforcement for Colonel Clark. Anyhow, we’ll find out. Take hold, and let’s drag the canoes into the water.”

This was quickly done, and with wild grape vines for tow lines, Tom and his companions promptly towed the five dugouts to the island, where they had pitched their own camp.

“I say, Tom, what’s your idea—about the dugouts, I mean? Why did you bring ’em over here?”

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It was Ike Todd who asked the questions.

“Well, you see, whoever put the dugouts where we found them, means to come back and use them to cross the river with. Now, that may be a raiding party which is planning to run amuck in Kentucky. If so, we’ve put a spoke in their wheels. They won’t find their dugouts, and they must make some more before they can get across the river. Before they can do that, our friend Col. Clark will be here with all our force, and we’ll make sausage meat out of them. On the other hand, the men who put the dugouts there may be hunters from the south side of the river—men off on a long hunt in the Illinois. If so, they may come back at any minute; and if they do, I want to detain them till Colonel Clark comes. As we’ve got possession of their boats, that will be as easy as skinning a cat.”

“But why do you want to detain ’em till Colonel Clark comes?”

“Why, so that some of them may be persuaded to join our expedition. You know how badly we need every man we can get.”

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"Oh, I see," answered Sim Crane, who had asked the last question.

"That's funny," said Ike, "when you aren't provided with spectacles."

"Then you saw it before Tom explained it, did you? Honest Injun, Ike, did you see it?"

"Well—no," answered Ike, who was far too brave a boy to be untruthful, even in trifles. "To tell the truth, I didn't. But it's plain enough now. Listen! What's that?"

There was a sound of voices from the northern shore, nearly a mile away—the voices of men calling to each other as from a distance. It was the habit of these wild men of the woods to shout to each other from any distance, when there was occasion for speech, and distance lay between. They were so accustomed to the solitude of the woods, and to isolation from their fellow men, that they never thought of being overheard, however loudly they might shout. When speech was necessary—even at great distances—they did not hesitate to

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speak or shout in any tone that might be necessary. But when speech was not needed, they were gifted with a capacity of silence that could hold its peace for hours, and even for days at a time.

Just now, the men on the northern shore were shouting to each other in a tone so loud that Tom Harrod could easily make out that they were perplexed by their failure to find their dugouts where they had left them. Listening to their voices, also, and their intonations, he concluded that they were probably Long Knives from the southern side of the river, but of this he could not be quite sure, and it made a difference.

“Put out the fire!” he commanded. “Then, drag the canoes away out into the bushes, and hide them securely. Keep a good lookout for the flatboats—though they simply can’t get here before to-morrow—and wait here while I go over there and find out what I can.”

With that he pushed the skiff off the shore, and, leaping into it, with his rifle by

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his side, rowed silently across the river. Cautiously approaching a point on the shore where the new comers had at last built a fire, he paddled about in the darkness—for night had fallen—closely observing the men on shore as they prepared their supper.

Having satisfied himself that they were Long Knives, and not enemies, he presently pushed the prow of his skiff up on the sands, and, rifle in hand, marched up to the camp fire.

The moment his presence was discovered, every man in the company—there were about twenty of them—seized his rifle and sprang to his feet, as if challenging the boy's approach. They quickly saw, however, that he was alone, and they relaxed their vigilance as a thing unnecessary.

Tom bade them good evening, and one of them, manifestly their leader, the moment he heard the boy's voice, called out—

“That's Tom Harrod, boys, or else I'll eat my coonskin cap.”

Tom looked at the man a moment, and then held out his hand.

## A DISCOVERY AND A CAPTURE

"You're John Duff," he said.

"Yes—an' I ain't a fergittin' the time you an' me went on a huntin' trip together. Le's see. That must 'a' been two year ago, or purty nigh onto that. An' do you 'member that b'ar you killed, jes' as he was a clutchin' me? He'd got some on his fingers into me already, an' ef you hadn't 'a' shot at the very identical second you did, he'd 'a' made mince meat out o' my flesh in jest about the twinkle of a deer's tail. I say, boys, this is Tom Harrod, an' he's all right. I've hunted with him, an' as I've intimyated, he saved my life wunst jes' by his quickness on trigger. But whar' did you come from, Tom, an' how did you git way down here, an' what does it mean? Is you on a long hunt?"

The Kentuckians were always hunting, but now and then—as was briefly explained in another chapter of this story—one of them wandered away on what was known as a "long hunt." With only his rifle for companion, and inspired only by the desire to explore new regions, and see new sights,

## LONG KNIVES

and meet new adventures—in brief, by the instinctive human yearning for travel into strange lands—he would go off into the woods and journey for hundreds, or even thousands, of miles, alone and on foot, depending solely upon himself and his own resources, in a wilderness haunted by savage and so-called civilized enemies, and by wild beasts—a wilderness in which no human aid could be hoped for, if by chance a wound or a fever should render him helpless.

They were infinitely brave men—the men who went alone upon “long hunts”—but there were so many of them among the few hundreds who composed the population of Kentucky and Tennessee at that time, that their prowess was regarded as a commonplace of the wilderness, a matter of course, an ordinary incident in the life of the frontier. Accordingly, Tom Harrod answered:

“Well, I don’t know. It may turn out to be long or short. Where have you fellows been?”

“On a huntin’ trip up into the Illinois.”

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It should be explained that at that time the region now constituting southern Illinois, was known not as "Illinois," or as "the Illinois Country," but simply as "the Illinois," as if the geographical term had been plural, and in a sense it was so. It meant "the Illinois towns."

"Ain't there game enough south of the river?" asked Tom, as he began eating the supper of ash cake and broiled prairie chicken, which he had been cordially asked to share, and which he specially enjoyed because of the ash cake, for the reason that he had not tasted any but meat food, and raw meat, at that, for many days past. "Ain't there game enough south of the river?"

"In course they is," answered John Duff, who was standing sponsor to his companions for Tom Harrod on grounds of old acquaintance; "but you see, us fellers likes to go into all the out'n the way places, jest to see what they looks like, so to say; an' so we's been up in the Illinois, a huntin' an' a lookin' about, like."

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"Have you been to Kaskaskia and Cahokia?" asked Tom, without seeming to lay much stress on his question.

"Yes," answered one rather talkative member of the returning hunting party. "Yes; leastways, *I did*, an' I had a lot o' fun! You see, them French people up there ain't a thinkin' about much only dancin' an' drinkin', an' that sort o' thing, an' so a feller like me could have a good time with 'em."

"What about the Britishers and the Indians?" asked Tom.

"Well, the Britishers is a watchin' the Mississippi River, purty clost, 'cause that's the only way an enemy is expected," answered the hunter. "They ain't expectin' of any enemy, howsomever, an' as they're purty strongly fixed up in their fort, like, they ain't a keerin' much. As fer the Injuns, well, you know how fickle they is. Sometimes they's one or two hundred of 'em in the town, a gittin' drunk an' a raisin' of a rumpus, like, an' sometimes they ain't an Injun anywheres in sight or hearin'. You

## A DISCOVERY AND A CAPTURE

know how the Injuns is, Tom. They ain't no sort o' dependin' on 'em."

"How about the Frenchmen?" asked Tom.

"Well, they're a standin' by the Britishers, though they ain't got no partic'lar use fer 'em. You see, the Frenchmen is under hack, like, an' the half-breeds don't know nor care much what they are. All the French an' the half-breeds keers fer is to be let alone to trap an' hunt an' dance an' have a good time, like. They don't keer fer much else."

"Well, now," said Tom, "suppose any strong force should beat out the Britishers up there, what would the Frenchmen do?"

"Well, I reckon they'd make friends with the winnin' party. That's mostly their way. But they've done got a exaggerated notion o' the sperrit of the Kaintucky Long Knives. The Britishers has told 'em as how us fellers from the south of the river is a terrible lot o' fellers, what revels in blood an' gits camp meetin' shoutin' with gladness when slaughter's a goin' on. I

## LONG KNIVES

'spose 'twould work both ways. Ef it come to submittin', like, they'd submit to save their skins. But ef they was mustered on the other side, they'd fight like demons to keep from fallin' into the hands of the Kaintucky Long Knives."

Tom was quick to see the value this information would have for George Rogers Clark, and he cherished it in his memory; but he said nothing further on the subject. Instead, he asked the hunters whether or not they were willing to wait a day or two on the chance of wanting to join in the big hunt, of which he was the forerunner.

"In course we is," answered the loquacious one. "We's got to wait anyhow, seein's how we ain't got no canoes to git acrost the river in."

"Well," answered Tom, "if you'll wait here for a day or two, I'll see to it that you have all the canoes you need to cross the river with. Now, I'm going to say good-night."

The men were ready enough to agree to the waiting arrangement, though they did

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not know what it was they were to wait for. Their camp on the Illinois shore was a comfortable one; they were in no hurry; they had plenty to eat, and the prospect of further adventure was alluring to their errant minds.

So Tom returned to his skiff, and rowed across the river to his own island camp.

## XI

### JOHN DUFF'S PROMISE

**T**OM HARROD was anxious and impatient. He knew the wilfulness of the Long Knives, and he feared they might change their minds before Colonel Clark's flotilla could get there. He knew how important it was to Clark to receive so strong a reinforcement as this company of hunters would be if they joined him, and he was anxious that his commander should arrive before the patience of the hunters should give out. At any rate, he determined to retain their canoes and to say nothing about his knowledge of their whereabouts. That would compel some delay on their part, but it might not compel enough. He knew how expert these men were with their axes, and how quickly if they chose they could chop down some

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poplar trees and fashion new dugouts for themselves.

So Tom's supreme anxiety was that the Clark flotilla should arrive at the earliest possible moment.

On his return to the island he hastily explained matters to his two companions, and added:

"Now I want you two to put one of the dugouts into the water and paddle up the river to-night. Paddle slowly, and keep on up till you catch sight of the flat-boats. Then—just as soon as you see them—hurry back here to report. I'll take the skiff in the morning and row over to the other shore, just to keep the men there contented, but I'll be back again very soon. Now off with you!"

The two boys dragged one of the canoes out of the bushes, threw a piece of meat into it, and paddled away into the blackness that overspread the river. It was midnight when they started and at the earliest dawn of day—between three and four o'clock—Tom roused himself from his

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much needed sleep and went to the best point of observation to scan the river above.

He could see nothing either of the flat-boats or of his companions in the canoe. He therefore jumped into the skiff and rowed over to the hunters' camp on the Illinois side.

"I've come over to take breakfast with you," he said to John Duff. "You see we fellows haven't any bread."

"Well you're welcome," answered John, "but we ain't got much more meal ourselves, an' so we 're a thinkin' o' movin' on. Some o' the fellers is a goin to start in to-day to make some new canoes."

"Can you keep a secret, John?" asked Tom, looking the backwoodsman straight in the eye.

"I kin, an' I will, ef *you* tell me the secret," answered the other. "I pledge it as one man to another on the immortal soul of that thar' b'ar you killed jest in time to save me from bein' cut into strings. What is it Tom?"

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"Well, for one thing, I've got all your canoes."

"*You?* Well what in thunder an' lightnin'!"

Then Tom explained, adding, "Now listen to me. Col. George Rogers Clark is coming down the river with about a hundred and fifty men. He is going to try to conquer the Illinois, and you fellows are going to join him and help do it."

"Well gee whillicky cracks!" exclaimed the old hunter. "Who'd 'a' thought o' that. But Tom he can't do it with no sich a force as that. You see them fellers up there, with all their Frenchmen and half-breeds enlisted as militia, kin muster nigh onto a thousan' men."

"You forget," said Tom, "it's George Rogers Clark that's in charge of this job, and he knows his business."

"Well for sure he does, an' it makes a difference. Now that I run things over in my mind I disremember any time when George Rogers Clark ever made a mess of any job he undertook to boss. Maybe he

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can do the trick, an' even ef he don't, why—well us fellers 'll stand by him."

"All right. That's all I want. Don't say anything about this affair till he comes. Then I'll bring your canoes over here to you and you can leave it to your men to join him or go back south of the river as they please."

"Say Tom," said John Duff, "do you think us fellers is turned white livered?"

"No, of course not. Why do you ask that?"

"Cause that's what your words seemed to implicate. Ef George Rogers Clark comes down here a lookin' fer a fight with the Britishers an' the Frenchmen, in course we's a goin' to jine him, an' it don't make no difference whatsoever whether he's likely to win or not. We won't have no use for them there canoes 'ceptin' to ferry his men acrost the river with. You can count on us fellers—every single feller amongst us. We'll stand by you till we falls a bleedin'."

That was the attitude of the Long Knives

## JOHN DUFF'S PROMISE

always. They were fighters as well as hunters. They were ready for any enterprise that involved danger and had a purpose. They were an unflinching, resolute, daring, determined race of men upon whom a commander could count as confidently as upon the rising and the setting of the sun.

Tom Harrod had accomplished his purpose; so he said to John Duff:

"I reckon I won't wait for breakfast, John. I want to hurry back because I'm expecting Colonel Clark every hour now, and I must be there to meet him. Don't tell your friends what's in the wind if you can help it, but don't let them make any more canoes, and above all don't let any of them get away till Clark comes."

"Here, Tom," said John, producing a huge ash cake. "You said you fellers hadn't got no bread over in your camp. Take this."

The ash cake weighed three or four pounds, and it was very welcome, for neither Tom nor his companions had tasted bread—except as Tom had done so in the hunters'

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camp on the night before—since leaving the Falls of the Ohio.

It was fortunate that Tom did not wait for breakfast, for upon his return to his own camp he found Ike and Sim there. They reported that the flat-boat flotilla had been seen about twelve miles up the river and that the sweeps were double manned, as if to hurry progress.

Tom instantly cut some strips of raw meat, and ate them with a part of the ash cake. Then he boarded the skiff and rowed away up the river to meet his commander. He reckoned that by diligent rowing he could encounter the flat-boats four or five miles above the island and guide them to their anchorage.

## XII

### A GREAT WAR GAME

**T**OM boarded Clark's flat-boat as he had planned, at a point six or seven miles above the island. This gave him time to report concerning the hunters and their news from the interior. The report was particularly pleasing as it promised a very important reinforcement and gave Clark a more definite knowledge than he had before had, of the conditions of the military problem he had to solve, for it had been nearly a year since his scouts had brought him news from the interior.

Before Tom made his report, Clark called about him his four Captains, John Montgomery, Joseph Bowman, Leonard Helm, and William Harrod.

The latter was a man nearly akin to Tom Harrod and so while waiting for the Cap-

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tains to answer the summons, Tom interrupted the conversation to say:

"I hope you won't assign me to Buck Harrod's company. If you do, everybody will accuse him of favoritism every time he gives me a place of honor and danger or a good job to do."

"You needn't worry," answered Col. Clark, "I shall not assign you to any company. I have authority to appoint you to a lieutenancy as a member of my own staff, and that's what I'll do with you. I want some men with me and always at my elbow—men whom I can depend upon. So you are Lieutenant Harrod now, of the Commandant's staff."

Then after talking matters over with the Captains, Clark said:

"We can do this thing if we go about it in the right way. If we don't we are doomed. Those sublimated idiots up there at Kaskaskia are evidently not expecting any attack. They are watching the river, more as a matter of military form than any-

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thing else. As to an advance over land it has never occurred to them as a possibility. That's a lesson we'll teach them in the matter of military tactics. But they outnumber us three or four to one, especially if they can hold the Frenchmen and half-breeds to their side. In a direct fight they could beat us out of our boots. Our only hope is in surprising them and managing somehow to detach the Frenchmen and half-breeds and Indians from them. I fancy the French and the half-breeds have no very great love for their British conquerors; and if we can get a chance to negotiate with them we shall make them our friends. But the trouble is to get a chance at them. If the British get wind of our coming, they will muster all the French, all the half-breeds and all the Indians against us, and plant them all in their fortified places to fight us. Our only hope is to take Kaskaskia by surprise. Nothing but secrecy can give us success."

"That is certainly true," said Capt. Helm.

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“But how are we going to maintain secrecy? There are always Indian scouts along the river.”

“That means that we must move as promptly and as rapidly as possible,” answered Clark. “We must start across country at once. We must move in a hurry all the time. We must compel silence among the men and we must capture or kill every scout who sees us.”

At this point Tom interrupted.

“We must get to business,” he said, “if we’re going to make the landing we intend.”

Instantly the Captains returned to their several boats, and under Tom Harrod’s direction the flat-boats, one after another, were safely swung into the bay he had chosen for their hiding place. No sooner was this done than Tom, with Hawk Camden for assistant oarsman, jumped into the big skiff and hurried across the river to the camp of the hunters.

Under Clark’s instructions he brought John Duff and John Saunders,—the man

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who had been in Kaskaskia—back with him, and presented them to Clark, who questioned both of them closely.

To Duff he said:

“I want to enlist your men if you can vouch for them as good men and true—men whom I can depend upon to march, to fight, to starve, to freeze and to die like men if the necessity comes. I don’t want any rabbits or cowards or skunks that run to their holes the moment danger threatens. I’d rather have one man, good and true, than a dozen or twenty doubtful ones. In fact I don’t want the doubtful ones on any terms.”

“Well,” answered John Duff, proudly drawing himself up to his six feet four, “I’m a’ thinkin’ they ain’t no better men than mine. Two or three on ’em has jes’ got to go back to the’r famblys, but they’s seventeen or eighteen on ’em what ’ll be glad to go with you, an’ they’s men what is ready for anything from the scissors of Delilah to the ten penny nail of Jael.”

Probably John Duff did not know that he

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was misquoting Sir Walter Scott, but his figure of speech was effective.

"Very well," answered Clark, "I'll enlist every man of them who wants to go with me and when the thing's over if we are successful, the State of Virginia will give to every man among them a warrant for three hundred acres of land in payment for his services. I am authorized to promise that to every man in my command. Now then Saunders, you offer yourself as a guide. How much do you know of the country between here and Kaskaskia?"

"I know all of it, and I know it good and fast," answered Saunders.

"Tell me about it," said Clark, who had ways of his own in dealing with men.

"Well, down here on the river they's cotton woods you know, an' sycamores an' the rest. When we git a little ways inland we'll strike the upheaval. That's a sort of high ground that runs catawampus, like, acrost the southern part o' the Illinois—it trends from northwest to southeast. It's a rollin' sort o' country, with flat praries a layin' in

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between, so to say. They's a good deal o' timber in some parts, an' no timber at all in other parts. Ef you want to go to Kaskaskia by the shortest road Colonel, I'll lead you northwest till we strike the hunters' trail. The rest o' the way will be easy."

"What is the hunters' trail?" asked Clark.

"W'y it's the trail from the east that the hunters an' Injuns always follers when they's a goin' to Kaskaskia."

"How long will it take us, cross country, to reach Kaskaskia—from here, I mean?"

"Well, maybe a matter o' six or seven days, ef we has good luck."

"We must do it in four days at the outside," answered Clark, speaking more to himself than to the guide; "and we must make our own luck as we go along."

George Rogers Clark never pursued either an inquiry or a conversation further than was necessary for the accomplishment of his purpose. So now he turned to Tom Harrod and said:

"Take a skiff and some writing materials and cross to the hunters' camp. Enlist the

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men there—every one who wants to go with us—and administer the oath of enlistment to them. Don't take a single man who hesitates. Set every such man across the river to the Kentucky shore and give him warning to get away from the river as fast as possible."

"Now then, Saunders, jump into a boat with me, and show me whereabouts I can best land my force and provisions and ammunition and begin the march inland."

Under guidance of Saunders's suggestions, but using his own eyes and depending exclusively upon his own judgment, Clark explored the Illinois shore with minute attention to every detail that might help or hinder the landing. Finally he selected the mouth of a gully near Massac and hurriedly returned to camp.

There was a good deal to be done by way of preparation, but Clark had a positive genius for organizing men, setting each to do the thing he was fittest for, and securing the results he desired. Just now every hour was precious, and Clark made every hour

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yield its proper share of results. By working all day and all night and keeping everybody else at work he succeeded in making the landing, securely hiding his boats and preparing his force for beginning its march by ten o'clock in the forenoon of the second day.

Then he ordered the men to sleep for four hours, but he did not himself sleep. His mind was too full of anxiety for that. Think of what he was doing or undertaking to do! With a mere handful of men,—less than a hundred and fifty in all—with means so meagre that any less heroically resolute man would have abandoned the task as hopeless,—he was setting out to conquer for Virginia and the United States, a vast territory of incalculable value, which was held by an enemy outnumbering his own force by six or eight or possibly ten to one. The success of his expedition, as he clearly foresaw, would mean to the young American Republic, a future of unlimited expansion, an agricultural wealth unmatched in all the civilized world, a career of overmas-

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tering glory and prosperity, such as no nation in all the earth might even dream of rivalling. On the other hand his failure would mean that the British, securely holding all that great northwestern territory, would, with their Indian allies, descend in overwhelming force upon Kentucky, Tennessee and all the rest of the American settlements west of the mountains, exterminate the people there, desolate their homes, and securely plant a power west of the Republic which must ultimately crush and destroy it from the rear.

Never in all the world's history did any man undertake a task so tremendous with means so meagre. Never did so much depend upon the genius, the energy, the circumspection of one man.

He knew he could depend upon his men to fight—but of what use would even the bravest fighting be, if his men should be outnumbered overwhelmingly? What could his little company do in a contest with six or eight or ten times as many men, especially if these men of superior numbers were en-

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trenched in fortifications, and armed with cannon, of which he had none?

It was his task by trick and device, by secrecy, by surprise, by diplomacy, by sheer force of his genius, to equalize these conditions. It was his hope to make himself master of the military situation at Kaskaskia by complete surprise; and, by clever diplomacy, to win to himself the allegiance of the French, the half-breeds, and the Indians. His task was not merely military; the diplomatic side of it required even more of ingenuity, cleverness and skill in playing upon the strength and the weakness of human nature than did the merely fighting side.

George Rogers Clark confidently believed that he could win the French, the half-breeds and most of the Indians to his side, if he could get a chance to negotiate with them. To get that chance was his most serious problem.

The French and the half-breeds, with whom most of the Indians were in sympathy, had been conquered by the Eng-

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lish, and had very reluctantly yielded obedience to their new masters. But they had been taught by those new masters that the Americans, and especially the Virginians—whom they knew as the Long Knives—were a peculiarly cruel and barbarous set of men. As a consequence the French, the Indians and the half-breeds were ready to fight in aid of the British for the repelling of any invasion by the Long Knives.

It was Clark's plan, first to play upon the terror that the very name of the Long Knives inspired in these people,—thus compelling them to remain cowering in their homes—and then to treat them so gently, so generously, so fairly and so considerately as to make of them his friends and allies.

But in order to do that he must push his force into Kaskaskia without discovery and make himself master there before the British could summon their French, Indian and half-breed allies into the fort for its defense.

Secrecy, therefore, and silence, and celerity, were absolutely necessary. But could

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he maintain the secrecy, enforce the silence and move with the celerity necessary?

These questions weighed heavily upon Col. Clark's mind, and he gave to their solution those hours that he had assigned to his men for sleep.

## XIII

### LOST IN THE ENEMY'S COUNTRY

**T**HERE was not a great deal for the little force to transport. In his own account of the expedition, Clark says that "We left the whole of our baggage, except as much as would equip us in the Indian mode." That is to say they had no baggage at all; no wagon train, no reserve supplies of anything but ammunition.

Every man wore trousers, high boots and a hunting shirt. Every man had a belt with his "long knife" in it, and with a few little conveniences—tobacco and the like—hanging upon it. Every man carried his long, heavy and deadly-accurate rifle over his shoulder. Each had his powder horn slung under his right arm. Each had a supply of bullets in a small belt pouch, and a bullet mould in one or other of his pockets,

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and each had a few spare flints somewhere about his person.

For at that time only flint-lock guns were in use. We should account these very clumsy weapons in our day, but they were the best known in that time, and in the hands of the Virginia Long Knives, they were exceedingly deadly arms, chiefly because of the extraordinary skill of the Long Knives in using them. Their accuracy of aim has already been spoken of in this story. It is sufficient to say here that when one of the Long Knives shot at any thing he hit it, and when he shot at any living thing it instantly became a dead thing.

The flint-lock rifle was a gun carefully made and very carefully rifled so that its bullet might go straight to its mark. It was loaded from the muzzle, into which a measured charge of loose rifle powder was poured. Then a round bullet, cushioned with a piece of greased cloth called a "patching," was inserted into the muzzle and driven down with a ramrod.

At the side of the breech of the gun—

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opposite the point where the powder charge lay—there was a little hole, about the size of a cambric needle, leading from the powder charge into what was called the “pan.” The “pan” was a little metal trough. Into it the hunter, when he had loaded his gun, poured a grain or two of powder. Then he closed it by shutting down a steel trap door, which had a curved extension upwards, the whole working on a hinge.

The flint was securely fastened into the hammer of the gun. When the trigger was pulled the hammer fell, and the flint, scraping down over the roughened surface of the curved extension, raised it, opening the “pan” and pouring a shower of sparks into it. These set fire to the powder priming in the “pan” and that set off the charge within the gun.

Once in a great while the powder in the pan—called the priming—would go off without igniting the charge in the gun itself. That was called “a flash in the pan”—an expression which, as a figure of speech, has long outlived the gun that gave it birth.

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But these were not clumsy guns, so far at least as their use was concerned. They "missed fire" less frequently than did the percussion cap guns which succeeded them in use, and scarcely more frequently than do the breech-loaders of our own time with their metallic cartridges. The chief advantage that modern arms possess over these guns of an older time, is that they can be loaded more quickly and therefore fired more rapidly.

The only things Clark had to transport, beyond what his men carried upon their persons, were a supply of lead with which to make bullets, and a reserve supply of powder. He had so little in the way of provisions that the men could carry it all, with the prospect that it would all be eaten up on the march, as in fact it was.

Indeed the little force had to depend for their sustenance largely upon such game as they could kill on the journey. To secure this Clark appointed certain men as hunters, forbidding all the other men to fire their rifles, just as he forbade them to

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shout or to make any other noise that might attract attention to their presence in the Illinois country. His military discipline was the severest these men had ever known, but they understood the peculiar necessity which required such discipline, and they willingly obeyed their orders.

For the first two days the march was very rapid, the men actually running wherever the nature of the ground permitted. At the earliest dawn of each day Tom Harrod was hurrying the work of breakfast-getting, and by sunrise the march toward the northwest was resumed. It was continued so long as the daylight sufficed to show the men the ground they were walking over.

About noon on the third day Tom Harrod, who had charge of the scouts in front, halted them and hurriedly sought out the commander of the expedition.

"John Saunders, the guide, has lost his bearings," he reported.

"Halt the column, then, and send John Saunders to me."

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"He is half a mile in front," reported Tom, "but I'll have him here soon."

"Is there anybody with him, to forestall tricks?"

"Yes, I left Ike Todd and Sim Crane, with orders to shoot him if he attempted to betray us."

"All right. Send him to me."

As Tom started off to execute his orders, Clark sent for his four Captains and instructed them to inquire diligently if anybody in their commands knew John Saunders or could vouch for him. The inquiry revealed the fact that nobody in all the force knew anything of the stranger. He professed to have lived for a time in Kentucky, but none of the Long Knives had ever met him there. He had certainly lived and hunted in the Illinois country, and knew it well. That fact tended to confirm the angry judgment of the men that his present bewilderment as to his whereabouts was feigned and that it was his purpose to betray the expedition into the hands of the enemy.

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The men were angry almost beyond control. They clamored for permission to lynch the guide without further ado. George Rogers Clark restrained them sternly, and when Saunders was brought to him he excluded from the conference everybody but the four Captains and his personal staff Lieutenant, Tom Harrod.

Then he questioned Saunders closely, observing every twitch of the man's facial muscles in an endeavor to read the truth—whatever it might be—in his countenance.

"What does this mean, Saunders?" he asked. "You have repeatedly told me you knew every inch of this country."

"So I do, Colonel. But somehow I've got turned around, like. Didn't you ever do that? Everything's sort o' twisted an' wrong end first, in my head, an' so I'm bothered."

"Now listen to me," said Clark. "This isn't the sort of country that a man easily forgets if he has ever known it. Look! There's a hill off yonder to the left, with

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a clump of trees on top. There's a creek to the right, with a fringe of cotton woods along its banks. There's an open prairie in front, with clumps of trees at its further edge. Certainly the landmarks are plain enough. If you know this country you must know where you are."

"That's all right, Colonel," answered the man in abject distress, "but you see I've got myself sort o' turned around, like so that one way seems to be t'other way. Ef you'll give me a little time I'll work it out all right."

"Very well," answered Clark, while the men were muttering imprecations upon "the coward," "the traitor," "the spy."

"Very well. You shall have two hours in which to find yourself. If you do it in that time, well and good. If you don't, there'll be a funeral in camp this afternoon, and you will be the corpse. Tom, take a detail of men and go with this fellow wherever he wants to go. If he tries to escape kill him. If he plays you any tricks, kill

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him. Now go, Saunders, wherever you like and see if you can make out where we are."

These conditions were severe, but they were necessary. The fate of the expedition and the life of every man in that little force hung upon them. One of two things was certain: either this man was a traitor seeking to betray the expedition into the hands of the enemy, or he was temporarily bewildered. If he proved to be a traitor he must die and the expedition must take care of itself as best it might by a retreat or a hurried cross-country march to the Mississippi river and across it into the Spanish country. If he was not a traitor, but was genuinely bewildered for a time, he could find his bearings within the two hours allowed him, for Clark had seen enough of his guiding to feel certain that Saunders really knew the country he was traversing.

Accordingly Tom Harrod, with Ike Todd, Sim Crane and Hawk Camden as a detail hurriedly led the man to the front again. Tom's reason for taking Hawk

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Camden with him was that he had discovered in Hawk a peculiar genius for woodcraft,—a peculiar gift of finding the way—and he thought the Virginia hunter might help Saunders to save his own life by finding his bearings.

The little party went out upon the prairie, and for a time Saunders stood still, looking about him as if trying to make out the landmarks and their bearings. Presently he said to Tom:

“They’s been a big injun camp hereabouts sence I was here the last time, an’ the redskins has cut away many o’ the trees, sort o’ changin’ the countenance o’ the land, like. Lem’me see—”

Then after a pause he went to a walnut tree and measured off a space from its root. Then with his long knife he diligently dug in the soil, but with no result.

His two hours were nearly at an end when at last he went to another walnut tree, on the opposite side of the glade, and began stepping off a distance. Then Hawk Camden interposed.

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"Say, neighbor, may be you'se got your directions mixed up. Which way do you want to measure from the tree?"

"Northwest, an' they ain't no sun to go by," answered the man, sweating now with apprehension because his term of two hours had well nigh come to an end.

"I thought as much," said Camden, renewing his tobacco quid. "Well, you'se turned around shore enough. You'se a measurin' toward the southeast."

"How do you know, Hawk?" asked Tom Harrod.

"W'y it's plain enough. Moss grows on the north side of a tree, not on the south, an' ef they ain't any moss on a tree, as they ain't on this here one, the bark is darker on the north side than anywhere's else. Any fool ought to a' noticed that. Now see here. This is the north side o' this walnut tree. Northwest from its root is this way. Now Saunders, measure off."

The man did so incredulously, but with a despairing hope of finding what he wanted, and saving his life. Having stepped off

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the distance, he set to work digging with his long knife, with all the eagerness of a man in search of buried treasure. Presently his labor was rewarded. The point of his knife brought up some chunks of charcoal, and as it did so, the poor fellow fell to the ground in what might properly be called an agony of relief. For his two hours' term was up.

After a moment he sat up and looked about him after the manner of one coming out of a dream.

"It's all clear now," he said, "an' I know my way. I was turned around, like. I always gits turned around at this spot, an' that's why I buried that charcoal there, three year ago. It's my lan'-mark."

With that he set to work to bury the charcoal again for future use.

"You see charcoal's the most lastin'est thing they is in the world—more lastin' than rocks or anything else, so whenever I want to mark a spot anywheres I jest buries some charcoal at that spot, knowin' that it'll be there nex' time I come, even ef its a thou-

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san' years later. Now Tom you kin tell Col. Clark I've got my bearin's agin an' kin lead the column to the hunters' road, 'thout a shadder o' turnin' as the good book says."

## XIV

### THE LONG KNIVES IN TOWN

**I**T was on the Fourth of July that Clark's force approached Kaskaskia. They seized upon a house on the bank of the Kaskaskia River, about three-quarters of a mile above the town, ordered the people there to remain indoors, and then proceeded to collect all the boats that were to be found on the river, for use in ferrying the troops across.

Then it was that Zaccheus Bonty went to Col. Clark with the request that he might be permitted to preach "a movin' an' a inspiritin' sermon" to the men. Clark, who had learned to value the influence of Parson Bonty over his Long Knives, responded:

"Yes, parson, if you'll preach pretty nearly in a whisper and not allow anybody to shout. You see we're within less than a

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mile of the town, and we might be overheard."

"I'll be keerful an' discreet, thank you Colonel. I only want to put the sperrit o' fight into the men. That's the sperrit o' Joshua of old when he licked them other fellers, jest as we's a goin' to lick these here British fellers, ef it comes to a stand-up fight. I want to put that there sperrit into the boys, an' they's nothin' like preachin' to do that, 'cause preachin' is authorized by holy writ."

"All right," answered Clark, "go on and preach."

Thus authorized, Parson Bonty, busily engaged in picking a flint meanwhile—the picking of a flint being necessary to its efficiency—assembled the men and gave them this sermon:

"When I come away from home I couldn't bring a Bible with me, 'cause the only Bible we had weighed about ten pounds. But my daughters says to me, says they, 'Daddy, you knows the Bible too well to be at a loss for texts.' So men :

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brethren, an' feller sinners, I can't tell you jest where in the scripter my text fer to-day is to be found. But it's thar, safe enough, an' the words of it is: 'Smite 'em hip an' thigh.' That means you mustn't shoot too high, over their heads, like; but shoot at their middles. That's the way to win in the cause of the Lord an' overcome the prophets o' Baal. They's more bullets wasted by shootin' too high than in all other ways put together. So shoot low an' shoot to hit every time. Shoot at their hips an' thighs—then ef your bullet flies high it'll catch 'em in the head, an' ef it flies too low, it'll catch 'em in the shanks or the feet. Smite 'em hip an' thigh! Them's the words o' the Holy Scriptures, an' you must obey 'em. Now that I come to think of it, it's in what the schoolmasters calls the past tense. It says that Joshua, or whoever else it was among the holy prophets of old, 'smote 'em hip an' thigh,' but it amounts to the same thing. It tells you how he overcome the prophets o' Baal, an' it's a allegory you'd orter profit by. It means he shot at their

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hips an' thighs, an' you must do the same, ef you want to win the battle for the Lord. I don't know what sort o' weepsons the Childern of Israel had in them old days, but it don't make no real difference. The main thing is to shoot at their hips an' thighs, an' trust the Lord for the outcome.

"Now then, men an' brethrin' an' feller sinners, they's some other things to be considered. The scripters says, says they, 'Childern obey your parents in the Lord.' Ef they only said childern obey your parents,' and stopped there, we'd think it referred only to the young people—them as is childern in fact. But you observe it says: '*Childern obey your parents in the Lord.*' Now what does that mean? W'y it means that we's all childern an' has got to obey them as is sot over us in command, like. Now us fellers has got Col. Clark an' all the Cap'ns an' the Lieutenants fer our '*parents in the Lord,*' an' we's got to obey 'em to the letter. That's what the scripter means, an' we's got to live up to it. I don't know how hard a

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fight we's got ahead on us. Nuther do you. But as a inspired minister of the gospel I tell you, whether it's a hard fight or a easy one, whether it's a big fight or a little one, we fellers has got only two things to do. We's got to obey our parents in the Lord—which is to say our officers—an' we's got to shoot straight at the enemy's hips an' thighs.

“Now another thought. You remember what happened to Ananias and Sapphira when they lied to the apostle of the Lord. Well that's what'll happen to us ef we don't fight as we has swore to do when we taken the oath of enlistment. Now they's jest one other thing to be considered, an' that is this here: We's away off up here in the enemy's country, an' when the fight comes we's jest *got to win it*. They ain't no other road out fer us. Ef we don't win, the Britishers will subdue us an' the Injuns will sculp us, an' they won't none of us ever git back to our famblys. So you see we's jest *got to win*, an' when the fight comes, we's got to remember that, an' stick to it like a cuckle bur to a pa'r o' jeans

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breeches. They mustn't be no questin' about it. We's *got to win*, ef we don't want our ha'r to be sold to Hamilton at a lower price than we values it at. For my part Zaccheus Bonty don't mean to part with his ha'r tell he's dead, an' I hope the rest of you has the same sperrit. Remember to obey your parents in the Lord, an' shoot at their hips an' thighs."

While the Hardshell parson was preaching his sermon, George Rogers Clark was making his preparations. He had summoned his four Captains and his staff lieutenant, Tom Harrod, and to them he gave his orders as to what he wanted done, explaining his plans and purposes in order that they might the better carry them out. He had that afternoon sent Tom Harrod secretly into the town in the disguise of a hunter selling prairie chickens and squirrels, and Tom had brought back the information that Rocheblave, the commandant of Kaskaskia, was not expecting either an attack or an invasion, but was busily preparing for a grand ball to be given that night

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within the fort. Tom had learned also that nearly all the Indians and half-breeds had gone home, so that Rocheblave had only his comparatively small force of British troops to rely upon in the event of a fight. But in addition to these there was the French population, all the able-bodied members of which had been enlisted as militiamen in the British service.

“Now let me explain,” said Clark to his Captains, “the Frenchmen who constitute almost the entire population of the Illinois, have very little love for the English and no real loyalty to their cause. They are conquered subjects. The English have taken Canada away from them. They have overrun them out here in the Illinois, and are holding them in subjection by force. It is true these Frenchmen have enlisted as militia in the British service, but they have done so only because they have had a lot of lies told to them about us Virginians. I found out all that a year ago. The British have told them that we are fearful savages—cruel, merciless, inhuman demons—mur-

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derers, assassins and despoilers of homes. It is for that reason alone that they are ready to take up arms against us. And they practically control the Indians.

“Now my plan is to detach these Frenchmen and half-breeds from their British allegiance and make them our friends. I am bringing them news that they haven’t yet heard—news that the French king has allied himself with the Americans. When I tell them that, they will be ready enough to turn against the British and join forces with us.

“The chief difficulty will be in getting a chance to tell them that, but I think I know how to manage it. At any rate I’m going to try. Now for orders. We are going to slip into Kaskaskia to-night—just as soon as it is dark enough. With fifteen or twenty men, under Tom Harrod, I shall myself go into the fort secretly. The people there will be unarmed and dancing. A very small squad of armed men will be sufficient to hold them in awe. The rest of you are to terrorize the town. Those people

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have been told that we are demoniacal savages; you must convince them that the story is true. Captain Helm, you are to arrest, chain, and lodge in jail, all the principal male citizens. The troops must be deployed throughout the town so as to command every house in front and in rear. The men are to make all the noise they can. They are to call out, in French and in English, a warning to all citizens to remain within doors on pain of instant death, and finally no human being is to be permitted to leave the town. We don't want news to reach the other towns. Now then move your commands forward in absolute silence, which must be preserved until we are complete masters of the town. I will have the signal given—the firing of three shots just two seconds apart,—when I want the uproar to begin. One other thing: keep your men moving in such a way as to make them seem as numerous as possible. A little effort in that way will quickly convince the frightened people that our force numbers many thousands. That's all I have to say. I'll

## LONG KNIVES

take care of the rest. Get your men in motion. I will lead, with Tom Harrod's squad. Remember there is to be no sound made and no word spoken until I order the three shots fired. Then pandemonium itself is to break loose."

In absolute silence the force ferried itself across the river just as night fell. In absolute silence it marched toward the town. In absolute silence and secrecy it surrounded every house it came to, and warned the people dwelling there to remain indoors upon pain of instant death. A sentry was left at each door and so great was the terror inspired by the Long Knives that not only did nobody try to leave any of the houses, but nobody ventured even to descend the stairs or approach a doorway or a window.

Less than half an hour after the crossing of the Kaskaskia river was made, George Rogers Clark was master both of the town and of the fort. Rocheblave had expected no enemy and he was prepared for none. His attention was given exclusively to the business of ordering the dance in the fort.

## LONG KNIVES IN TOWN

He had here and there a sleepy sentinel posted at the entrances of the town, but this was solely as a matter of military form and not at all as precaution against assault or invasion. Tom Harrod, who with his squad led the advance, quickly seized upon these sleepy and generally sleeping sentinels, promptly choked them into silence, disarmed them and held the gates of the town until other Long Knives came to relieve him of that duty. Then, with George Rogers Clark leading, Tom's little command made its way, secretly and silently into the fort where a gala dance was in progress.

Under previous orders from Clark, Tom distributed his men around the outer border of the great ball-room, every man holding a cocked rifle in his hands, and standing ready to use it instantly should occasion arise, but every man as silent as a mummy who had been embalmed three thousand years ago.

The fiddles were going gaily. Rocheblave, on a gorgeously decorated dais was

## LONG KNIVES

gallantly entertaining the principal women of the place. The gallants of the town were making merry with the gentlewomen, dressed in the best that the borderland afforded, when suddenly a big buck Indian, who had been lying prone, after the Indian fashion, saw George Rogers Clark, leaning against one of the posts that supported the dancing hall's roof and looking on at the dance. Instantly the savage, who had met Clark in battle, recognized him, and gave the alarm with a shout.

The scene of confusion that instantly followed, cannot be easily described. All these people, men and women alike, had been taught that the Long Knives were desperadoes who revelled in slaughter, ruffians who rejoiced in bloodshed, savages who knew neither mercy nor humanity. Instantly all these people realized that they were in the hands of the terrible Long Knives, and Tom's men, each with his rifle at his shoulder, ready for instant use, emphasized every apprehension felt by the company. Not a man there was armed, and

## LONG KNIVES IN TOWN

the company was completely surrounded by armed men. Clark had promptly knocked the Indian alarm-giver into a condition of unconsciousness, and, planting one of his feet upon the chest of the prostrate savage he called out to the company:

“Go on with your dance. Nobody is going to interfere. But bear in mind that this is the Fourth of July, and that you are dancing now to American, not to British music.”

Then he ordered Tom Harrod to arrest Rocheblave, the commandant, and his staff of officers. After that he permitted the people there assembled, men and women alike to disperse and go to their homes, but with peremptory orders to stay there upon pain of death.

As soon as the company had left the dancing hall, Clark stationed himself outside, and waited until the people should have had time to reach their homes. As the town was small and as the late dancers were in a desperate hurry to secrete themselves. this did not take long.

## LONG KNIVES

Then Clark ordered three shots fired at two seconds' intervals.

Instantly a positively demoniacal racket pervaded the town. Every Long Knife who knew or had been able to learn the French phrases ran through the streets shouting in that tongue:

"Stay in your houses or you will be shot! Keep close or meet instant death!"

All the rest marched about in more or less disorderly groups, yelling, shooting, running as if in pursuit of victims, and making all that was possible of noise. Some of them found abandoned pans and kettles, which they beat lustily. A few secured horns which they blew after the manner of the final trumpet.

In the meantime the Long Knives, under direction of their officers, seized upon everything that could be used as a weapon, and long before morning the entire population was disarmed, and all were cowering in their homes awaiting the morrow with unutterable dread.

## XV

### HOW THE FRENCHMEN WERE CONQUERED

**W**HEN the morning of the fifth of July came, the first of George Rogers Clark's purposes was completely accomplished. Kaskaskia was his. Its inhabitants were disarmed and closely confined to their houses. Its commandant and all his troops were prisoners. A number of leading citizens had been arrested and put into irons. The terror was complete, the fear of the Long Knives universal.

Clark was ready now to work for his second purpose, which was, by courtesy and clemency and even excessive generosity, to win the friendship of those whom he had so terribly scared.

The French people entertained no doubt that they were to be forcibly driven from their homes by the terrible Long Knives,

## LONG KNIVES

just as their countrymen, the Acadians, had been by their British conquerors some years before. Early in the morning Pere Gibault, the leading priest of the town, together with a little group of patriarchal old men, asked leave to call upon the conqueror with a humble petition.

Clark sent Father Gibault not only permission to visit him, but a cordial invitation, saying:

“I shall welcome as a guest and counselor a clergyman whose character has won for him the unbounded confidence of the good French people of Kaskaskia and the region round about. Come to me, and tell me of the desires of your people.”

Notwithstanding the cordiality of the invitation Father Gibault and his aged associates supposed it to be inevitable that the French people should be driven from their homes. This they supposed was a necessary condition of war and conquest. But they appealed to Clark, not for any reversal of that sentence of banishment, but

## THE FRENCHMEN CONQUERED

for such amelioration as might be possible in its execution.

Father Gibault presented their petition.

“As we are to be separated,” he said, “never to meet again, it is our humble prayer that we may be permitted to meet in our church, hold a simple service there, and take leave of each other before parting for all time. Our religion differs from yours, but it is very precious to us, and we humbly crave permission to exercise it before we are scattered never to meet again.”

The tears were coursing down the cheeks of the priest as he chokingly presented his petition.

Clark had expected this and it gave him his opportunity. He was ready with his answer.

“I have no complaint,” he said, “to make against your religion. That is a matter which we Americans leave for every man to settle with his God. All religions are alike to us. We compel none; we favor none; we oppose none; but we protect all, leaving

## LONG KNIVES

every man free to worship any God he pleases in any way he pleases. Father Gibault, you and your people shall be free to assemble in your church and hold such services there as may seem to you best. But no man must leave the town without my permission, and no man must bear arms. Assemble your people—all of them. I will set a sentry at every door to see to it that nobody shall enter any of your houses during your devotions. My orders will make it certain that if any person—whether a soldier of my force or any body else—shall attempt to invade your homes during your absence at church, he shall suffer death upon your doorstep. We have come not to oppress but to protect you. Go now to your devotions. I will stand guard over your homes.”

With that rapid precision which every great commander practices, Clark issued instructions to Tom Harrod, who, as his executive staff lieutenant, was by his side.

“Order the several Captains,” he said, “so to post their men as sentinels, that every en-

## THE FRENCHMEN CONQUERED

trance to every house shall be covered by a rifle. The orders to the sentinels are to shoot without challenging, any and every person who shall attempt to enter any house during the absence of its owner and his family. Any sentry who fails to execute these orders shall himself suffer the penalty of death. Father Gibault, you and your people may now assemble in perfect peace and perfect confidence."

The news of all this spread rapidly from mouth to mouth through the town, and at the appointed hour the whole French Catholic population assembled in the church to hear mass, and to take a final leave of each other before the dispersion and exile which they still regarded as inevitable. So grateful were they for this privilege of a final farewell that they all said a devout Amen when Father Gibault introduced into the service a brief prayer for George Rogers Clark, as "a merciful conqueror who had gently entreated God's people, and had not interfered with their devotions."

The meeting being over, the people re-

## LONG KNIVES

turned to their homes under the earnest injunction of Father Gibault to remain there and await the further orders of their "merciful conqueror."

Then, Father Gibault, with his company of patriarchs, again waited upon Colonel Clark. Father Gibault was the spokesman for his comrades and for all the French people of Kaskaskia. He said:

"We fully realize that our present situation is the inexorable fate of war. We fully understand that our property must be confiscated, and that we must be exiled. To all that we are ready to submit. But we humbly petition you, Colonel Clark, that in the orders of exile men may not be separated from their wives and children—that families may not be divided, and that we may be allowed, in quitting our homes, to take with us some small stores of clothing and provisions for those dear to us."

At this point Clark, with a gesture of impatience and a countenance expressing resentful surprise, interrupted the priestly

## THE FRENCHMEN CONQUERED

spokesman. In common with most of the educated Virginians of that time, Clark spoke French as fluently as he did English. So, in French he replied:

“Do you mistake us for savages? I am almost certain you do, from your language. Do you think that Americans intend to strip women and children, or take the bread out of their mouths? My countrymen disdain to make war upon helpless innocence. It was to prevent the horrors of Indian butchery upon our own wives and children that we have taken arms and penetrated into this remote stronghold of British and Indian barbarity, and not the despicable prospect of plunder. Now, that the King of France has united his powerful arms with those of America, the war will not, in all probability, continue long; but the inhabitants of Kaskaskia are at liberty to take whichever side they please, without the least danger to either their property or their families. Nor will their religion be any source of disagreement, as all religions are regarded with equal respect in the eyes of the

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American law; and any insult offered to any religion will be immediately punished. And now, to prove my sincerity, you will please inform your fellow citizens that they are quite at liberty to conduct themselves as usual, without the least apprehension. I am convinced, from what I have learned since my arrival among you, that you have been misinformed and prejudiced against us by British officers, and your friends who are in confinement *shall be immediately released.*"\*

Then came a great change of mood on the part of the French inhabitants of Kaskaskia. From a condition of gloom and depression they were instantly raised to one of ecstatic rejoicing. Their apprehensions of exile, dispersion and impoverishment, were changed to confidence, trustfulness and hope. They were free to live their lives as they pleased, to go about their business and practice their religion unmolested.

\* This, and all the other formal speeches of George Rogers Clark, are copied from his own memoir, and given in his own words.

## THE FRENCHMEN CONQUERED

Those of their friends, the leading citizens of the town, who had been arrested and put in irons, were released without conditions. In return for all this clemency at the hands of the Long Knives, whose brutal and merciless savagery they had been taught to dread, they were not required either to espouse the American cause or to give any pledge not to oppose it. Clark had dismissed all that with a wave of his hand—assuming that he was too strong to need pledges, that he and his Long Knives could abundantly take care of themselves and of their country's cause, without anybody's aid.

Above all, these devout French people were delighted to learn that their religion was to be respected and not persecuted, that they might attend their church and carry on their lives after the manner of their ancestors, without let or hindrance—in short, that under the governance of the very Long Knives, whom they had been taught to regard with terror, they were perfectly free and perfectly protected in per-

## LONG KNIVES

son, property and religion, as they never had been before.

Their rejoicing was limitless. They wept together in gladness. They feasted in joy. They celebrated their deliverance in a hundred simple but emotional ways.

And in the midst of all their rejoicings, there was another keynote that set them singing. This was the news that the French King, to whom they had never in their hearts renounced their allegiance, had espoused the cause of the Americans, allying himself with the enemies of that arrogant British power that had so sorely oppressed them.

In their joyous enthusiasm these Frenchmen of Kaskaskia flocked around George Rogers Clark, clamorous to take an oath of allegiance to Virginia, and eager to enlist as soldiers under her banner. The entire population made itself American before the day was done, and all the young men of military age enlisted as soldiers under Clark, thus bringing to him a reinforcement which he badly needed. For while he had

## THE FRENCHMEN CONQUERED

successfully won this first step in his campaign, he still had before him the more difficult work of subduing the other towns, conquering Vincennes, and forever driving the British out of the Northwest Territory. With a task so difficult before him, and with a force so meagre as that under his command, a reinforcement consisting of only a score or so of men, was of the utmost value and consequence to him.

George Rogers Clark slept well that night for the first time in thrice twenty-four hours.

## XVI

### FATHER GIBAULT'S CONQUEST

**G**EORGE ROGERS CLARK was not accustomed to dilly-dally over anything he had to do. After the manner of all successful military commanders, it was his habit, when he had finished one task, to turn instantly to the next. Kaskaskia was in his possession. The French people there had been won from British to American allegiance, and best of all, the priest, Gibault, was enthusiastic in his loyalty, and Gibault was, in his own person, a notable reinforcement, for the reason that as a priest and as a man of rectitude and wisdom, he exercised an all-dominant influence over all the French and half-breeds in that region. They were, for the most part, ignorant and superstitious; he was educated, able, and conspicuously up-

## FATHER GIBAULT'S CONQUEST

right. They had learned to look to him not only for religious guidance, but for counsel in all worldly matters as well. What he advised, they did. What he commanded they accepted. What he ordered they regarded as inviolable law, and his influence was scarcely less among the Indians, who believed in the French far more than in their British conquerors.

Under these favorable circumstances, Clark ordered Captain Bowman, with his own company and a newly enlisted company of French militia, to move at once upon Cahokia, a settlement nearly opposite St. Louis, and possess it.

The task proved to be an easy one. Under Father Gibault's influence and advice, the French inhabitants of Cahokia promptly took the oath of allegiance to Virginia and became enthusiastic Americans—the more enthusiastic for the reason that they cherished bitter memories of British conquest and British oppression.

Thus far Clark's campaign had been altogether successful. But he realized that

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so long as Post Vincennes, on the Wabash, should remain in British possession, all that he had done was liable at any moment to be undone by the operations of an overwhelmingly superior force. Post Vincennes was the strongest of all the fortified places commanding that region. Its fort was armed with cannon, and it was usually garrisoned by a strong force. More important still, it was always in close communication with Hamilton's headquarters at Detroit, whence the "Hair Buyer General" could at any time send a heavy force to Vincennes. The place was surrounded, too, by numerous bodies of Indians, all of them in the pay of the British.

Colonel Clark's first care, therefore, after he had secured himself in his possession of the Illinois towns, was to plan measures for the conquest of Post Vincennes, the winning of the people there to American allegiance, and the making of treaties with the Indian tribes on the Wabash, who, if not placated in some way, might at any moment

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overwhelm him and exterminate his little army.

"It was then," he used to say in after years, "that my chickens began to come home to roost."

The priest, Gibault, thankful for Clark's favors, came to him by night and said:

"Colonel Clark, we Frenchmen are very grateful to you, and, believe me, we are very grateful to Virginia, a State that has rescued us from the condition of conquered people and made us free again. Under compulsion and against our wills we were British subjects—we—Frenchmen, who detest the British, and have suffered oppression at their hands. You have made us free American citizens—free to live our lives in our own way; free to practice our religion, not under an uncertain tolerance, but as citizens of a Republic that is founded upon the idea of the freedom and equality of all citizens, a Republic that does not undertake to dictate men's beliefs or to regulate men's lives so long as they commit no

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offense against just laws. I cannot tell you how very earnestly we Frenchmen desire the complete success of your expedition and the permanent dominance of the Americans in this Illinois country. But I can assure you of our readiness to help.

"I know how important it is for you to secure control of Post Vincennes. If you will let me, I will, myself, undertake that business for you."

"But how?" asked Clark, who had been expecting some such offer, though he did not care to reveal the fact that he had expected it.

"Why, you see, Vincennes is within my spiritual jurisdiction. The people there are members of my flock. You have seen how readily my flock obey me. If you will let me go to Vincennes, I think I can win all the people there to your cause. I shall tell them how generously you have treated us in the Illinois towns, and how happy we are under the liberal rule of the Virginia Long Knives. I will tell them of the French King's alliance. They will hasten,

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I think, to take the oath of allegiance to Virginia."

"But won't the British in the Post interfere?"

"There aren't enough British there, just now, to count," said the priest. "I have regular and secret advices from Vincennes. Governor Abbot, who rules in the fort, there, has gone to Detroit, leaving nobody of consequence in his place. If I can win the people, as I am sure I can, they will have no difficulty in taking possession of the fort."

"And you will undertake this mission?" asked Clark.

The priest uttered a little chuckle.

"My functions are altogether spiritual, you understand," said he. "I should expect you to send some one with me to manage the temporalities. I suggest Dr. Lafont. But while I have nothing to do with any but spiritual things, my advice to my people, even concerning things temporal, is apt to have influence, Colonel."

At that point the good priest distinctly

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winked at George Rogers Clark, and the Colonel thought he understood. He had seen enough of Father Gibault's dealings with the French people to understand how completely, as a spiritual adviser, the good priest had made himself master of their lives, their opinions and their conduct.

"Very well," he said, "and I thank you very much. I will send you to Post Vincennes, with Dr. Lafont as your associate in charge of the worldly side of things. I will send one or two of my men with you, by way of making your journey more comfortable—a huntsman to provide you with game, and a man skilled in the art of cooking it. I will send by you an address to the people of Vincennes, and another to the great Indian Chief, Tobacco's Son, the Grand Door to the Wabash. In my address to the people of Vincennes I will authorize them to select their own commander and to garrison their own fort with their own men, and with the assurance that Virginia and the United States stand ready to support them in their independence as

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Americans. I will organize your little retinue, Father Gibault, and provision you for the journey. You shall set out within a very few days, and I assure you of my own and Virginia's appreciation of the service. In the meanwhile, your people here shall learn how perfectly free they are in their lives and their religion, as American citizens. Liberty is the fundamental principle of the American Republic—liberty under just laws that restrain no man from living his own life in his own way so long as he doesn't wrong his neighbor. I will send for you very soon, and have everything ready for your journey."

Colonel Clark trusted Father Gibault, and profoundly believed in the priest's sincerity and loyalty. But as a military commander, in a very dangerous situation, he was not disposed to trust everything to the loyalty of any one man, particularly when that man was a stranger who had recently been hostile. So he sent for Tom Harrod and told him of the plan.

"Now, upon pretense of making the

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priest's journey easy for him, I intend to send two spies with him, with orders to report to me news of all that goes on. One of them will go as a huntsman, to provide food, and the other as a cook. I want you to pick out the men to go—men you can trust."

"I would suggest Hawk Camden and Ike Todd," promptly answered Tom. "Hawk is the most expert hunter I ever saw. I really believe if he were set down on a sandbar without a tree, or a shrub or a blade of grass on it, he'd find game some where and catch or kill it if he hadn't so much as a belt-knife to do it with. Ike Todd is a good cook, and he's a shrewd observer, as Hawk Camden is. I can think of no better men for your purpose."

"But Camden deserted from Corn Island," objected the Colonel.

"Yes, I know. But that was under a kind of force, you know, and I tell you you can trust Hawk Camden. I'll make myself responsible for him."

"Very well. Send him and Ike Todd,

## FATHER GIBAULT'S CONQUEST

and tell them privately to observe everything done, and listen to everything said. Tell them, too, that if they discover any scheme on foot for our injury, they are to let me know in short metre, even if they have to run away and come back here for the purpose."

"I'll instruct them," answered Tom, "and I'll answer for it that they'll carry out orders to the letter, unless they are killed trying to do it."

Then, Colonel Clark set about preparing his two addresses for Gibault to carry—one to the people of Vincennes, and the other to Tobacco's Son, the Grand Door to the Wabash. Fortunately, the precautions he had taken to prevent news of his conquest of Kaskaskia and Cahokia from reaching the British had been effective, and so, Hamilton, at Detroit, sent nobody to defend Post Vincennes.

In his address to the people of Vincennes, Clark explained that as he had the greatest confidence in their loyalty to any promises they might make, he sent no troops to gar-

## LONG KNIVES

rison their town, but left it to them—if they would take the oath of American allegiance—to appoint their own officers and become their own garrison, with Virginia to support them.

Gibault and his party set out on the 14th of July, and after a few days arrived at Vincennes. There was almost no British force there, so that the enthusiastic priest encountered no difficulty. He explained matters to the people, who, when they heard that the French king had espoused the American cause, professed eagerness to throw off the British yoke, which had galled them in many ways, and become Americans.

Gibault summoned the whole population to church, and after a solemn service, he administered the oath of allegiance in the most impressive way possible, while they stood before the altar with bared heads to receive the priest's benediction.

Then, upon leaving the church, the able bodied men among them, enlisted as troops of defence and elected a commanding officer, who promptly seized upon the for-

## FATHER GIBAULT'S CONQUEST

tress, ran up the American flag, and proclaimed Vincennes an American post.

The Indians round about, who had long been in the pay of the British for whom they had done much bloody and cruel work, were at first bewildered; but the Frenchmen of Vincennes, American citizens now, went among the savages as missionaries and explained the reasons for their change of allegiance. Especially they told the Indians that their old father the French king, had come to life again and had joined with the Americans against the British who had overrun their country. They told the Indians that their old father the French king, was very angry with them because they had "bloodied the ground," for his enemies, the British.

And the Indians understood. They had always been friendly with the French and now that the Frenchmen of the west, with the sanction of the French king, had thrown off their enforced allegiance to the British and joined the Long Knives, they were strongly disposed to do the same. But

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that could not be completely or finally done without the sanction of Tobacco's Son, the Grand Door to the Wabash. Clark had sent him what he called, in his later report of the campaign, "a spirited compliment," to which the Grand Door had responded in what seemed a friendly fashion. But something more definite must be arranged with Tobacco's Son, before Vincennes could be secure against an Indian attack. As that would require time and tact, Gibault urged the local commander to vigilance, and prepared for his own return to Kaskaskia with the good news of his success.

## XVII

### HAWK CAMDEN'S LETTER

**H**AWK CAMDEN'S skill in catching wild things extended to snakes as well as to birds and beasts. He could go into the woods, lie down on his back, and call squirrels and birds to him. He would feed them out of his hand, and presently they would permit him to caress them with his great, horny hands. But best of all he loved snakes, and he nearly always had three or four of these creatures coiled up in the pockets of his hunting shirt. He did not remove their fangs, as naturalists do, who have curiosity rather than affection, for wild creatures. He considered that a cruelty and a wrong. "How would you like to have your teeth jerked out with a handkerchief?" he used to ask when the thing was suggested. He was by nature

## HAWK CAMDEN'S LETTER

and by habit a wild man of the woods and the fields, and his sympathy with other wild creatures was abundant.

The wild creatures seemed to know this. He could lie down in the prairie grass, cluck a little, whistle a little, and presently gather around him a flock of the grouse known as prairie chickens. These are almost, if not quite, the wildest and shyest of feathered animals, but they recognized in Hawk Camden a friend who intended no harm to them. He killed game when he needed it for food, but he did so always in a fair contest, shooting birds only on the wing, and beasts only in full flight. Never would he take advantage of the confidence reposed in him by wild creatures at his own invitation. Prairie chickens, quails, squirrels and the like, that came at his call, were perfectly safe in their intercourse with him. He would never take game he needed by any species of treachery. When he wanted to kill game he went out with his gun, and, as he expressed it, "played fa'r."

But snakes were his special companions,

## HAWK CAMDEN'S LETTER

as they are with many Indians, and, handling them gently, as he always did, he was never bitten by any of them.

When he saw clearly how things were going at Vincennes, he knew how Colonel Clark would welcome news of it all, and he determined to send him news.

He hunted out an Indian boy whom he felt that he could trust—one who could travel at a trot all day, and at a run much of the time. To him Hawk made a tempting offer.

“Ef you’ll take a letter from me, an’ take it to Kaskaskia in jest a little less’n no time, I’ll give you two beautiful rattlers and three copperheads for luck.”

With that he withdrew the serpents from his pockets and exhibited them in all their beauty.

The Indian boy eyed them greedily, and, as he thought nothing of a journey of two or three hundred miles across the prairies, he eagerly assented. Hawk gave him the snakes, and then set to work laboriously to write his letter. It ran in this wise:

## LONG KNIVES

“Kernel Clark — Honored Sir: This heer preest is a doin things up brown, as the feller says. He has skoooped in all these heere peepil an they has tooken the oth of alleygyence, They has tooken the fort an theys masters of the town, an they seems mitey hapy over it. The Injuns dont seem to understan it yit, but theys imprest. You no how it is with the Injuns. Tha cant think much at a time. Thay thinks a little an then thay gits tired an leaves it all over til anuther time. Stil i opinion its oll rite. This heer preest is a workin with em. Hes a sendin the leadin sittizens to argyfy with em an to tell em about thayre French father a bein mad with em fer bloodyin the groun fer his ennymys the british. Thay’l al com roun rite you may bet on that.

So no more at present

Yores tel deth

HAWK CAMDEN.”

“P. S. I jes thot hows youd like to heer about this, so dont blame me fer ritin. Ile stay heer tel the preest says go, an then Ile

## HAWK CAMDEN'S LETTER

go with him. Them's yore orders ef i krectly understans em. Any how Ile stik tel the cows kums home, an they aint any kows to speak of in this heer reggin. The Injuns eats em all up.

Yores tel deth

HAWK CAMDEN."

Hawk's letter reached Colonel Clark several days before Gibault and his party arrived at Kaskaskia on their return journey, and it mightily relieved his mind. He said to Tom Harrod:

"Your friend Hawk Camden is a faithful fellow, and he has a lot of shrewd common sense, even if he can't spell the same word twice in the same way."

It was not until the beginning of August that Father Gibault returned to Kaskaskia, accompanied by several of the leading men of Vincennes, who were enthusiastic in their new American allegiance.

On the surface, George Rogers Clark's expedition had been completely successful. He was master now of the Illinois towns, and Vincennes itself was under his control.

## LONG KNIVES

Nevertheless, he was filled with anxiety and apprehension.

The term for which his men had been enlisted was expiring, and he had no authority to reënlist them. If he should send them home, there would be nobody to hold what he had conquered, no force with which to complete the work he had done and to render it permanent. If these men should now go home, the expedition might as well never have started.

Another thing. He had no confidence in the ability or disposition of the people of Vincennes to hold that most important of all posts against any determined force that Hamilton might send from Detroit to reconquer it.

Still another thing was that he had not yet made binding treaties with the Indians, either those on the Wabash or those in the region of the Illinois towns.

In a word, his work was so far unfinished that all of it must go for nothing if he could not complete it, and without a military force he could do nothing.

## HAWK CAMDEN'S LETTER

He decided to usurp authority and reënlist his men. As he naïvely explained it in his later account of the matter, "to abandon the country and all the prospects that opened to our view in the Indian Department at this time, for the want of instruction in certain cases, I thought would amount to a reflection on government, as having no confidence in me. I resolved to usurp all the authority necessary to carry my points. I had the greater part of our troops reënlisted, on a different establishment."

That is to say, he reënlisted all of the Long Knives who were willing to stay with him, sending the rest of them back to the Falls of the Ohio under Col. William Linn, there to be discharged. To make good the loss of those who would not reënlist under his usurped authority, he enlisted Frenchmen of the Illinois towns, and commissioned an enterprising young Frenchman to command them.

It was necessary for him still further to weaken himself by sending one of his most

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efficient officers, Captain John Montgomery, to Virginia, with despatches to the Government, praying that his usurpation of authority in the reënlistment of the troops might be sanctioned, and that his promises of land grants to the men in return for their services, might be legalized.

It would take several months, as he very well knew, to get a reply from this appeal to the authorities at Williamsburg, in Eastern Virginia. In the meanwhile, he took that reply for granted, and went on with his work precisely as if his authority had been sent to him, and not usurped. He sent Captain Bowman, with troops, to garrison Cahokia, and established Captain Williams in command at Kaskaskia. He was still very uneasy with regard to Vincennes. He did not distrust the sincerity or the loyalty of the people there, but he had very little, if any, confidence in their ability and resolution in the defence of the town and fort in case Hamilton should send a strong force to assail them. He wanted an American officer there, and while his work of treaty-

## HAWK CAMDEN'S LETTER

making with the Indians of the Illinois was unfinished, he felt that he could ill spare any of the officers upon whom he relied for support and assistance. It would be many weeks, and perhaps many months, before he could get matters at Kaskaskia into such shape as to send a garrison of his own men to Vincennes.

In the meanwhile, however, he decided to detach Captain Leonard Helm for that duty. Captain Helm was a Virginian of the old, duty-loving school—a man who never flinched from danger or faltered in the face of difficulty. He was, as Clark describes him, “past the meridian of life,” but he was still as vigorous as any of the young Long Knives under his command. He knew all the wiles of the huntsman—all the lore of woodcraft. He was discreetly cautious when caution was necessary, and daringly audacious when audacity seemed to be needed. In a word, without being a great commander, fit to handle armies and conduct campaigns, he was a man abundantly to be trusted to carry out orders in

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the execution of his commanding officer's plans. If he could have taken a company or so of the Long Knives with him to Vincennes, he would have held that place against all comers. But in that case we should have lost one of the most heroic and dramatic stories in American history—the story of George Rogers Clark's conquest of Vincennes, which remains to be told in this volume.

## XVIII

THE TOBACCO'S SON, THE GRAND DOOR TO THE  
WABASH

**G**EORGE ROGERS CLARK was usually a man of few words. He was in the habit of doing his own thinking without much of consultation with others, reaching his own conclusions without asking anybody's opinion or advice, and acting upon those conclusions without soliciting anybody's approval.

But he and Tom Harrod stood in peculiar relations with each other, as the history, already given of their intimacy, has shown. So Tom Harrod freely asked him questions which nobody else dared ask him at all. About this time, Tom, lying upon his back, one day, with his hands clasped under his head, and with his legs extended, said to his commander, or asked him, rather:

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“Why don’t you finish the job here?”

“How do you mean?” asked Clark, who was smoking a corn-cob pipe.

“Why don’t you send for the Indians and make treaties with them, and thus set yourself free to use your force in any way you please?”

Clark puffed at his pipe for a full minute before he replied.

“Tom,” he said, “that’s the biggest mistake the white people of this country ever made.”

“What is?”

“Why, sending for the Indians and asking them to make treaties. It makes beggars of us. It means to the Indians that we are so terribly afraid of them that we crave peace and amity at their hands on any terms. Now, I propose to have the thing the other way around. We are conquerors here. If the Indians round about want war with us they can have it. If they want peace under treaties, they must ask for it. I tell you, Tom, we have spoiled the Indians and taught them that we are afraid

## THE TOBACCO'S SON

of them. We have been suppliants where we should have been the dictators of terms. I have decided upon an opposite policy. I am here, not as a petitioner for anybody's favor, but as a conqueror. If the Indians want peace, they must ask for it, and they must give guarantees of good behavior. I shall not ask them to make treaties. They must ask me."

Tom lay silent for awhile, with his hands clasped under his head. Then, he said:

"I reckon you are right, but it costs time. Still, I reckon you're right, and from what I hear, the Indians are seriously thinking of coming to ask for terms."

"What do you hear, Tom?"

"Why, Hawk Camden has been out among them—you know he prowls about everywhere—and he says they have been waiting for you to send for them till they are tired and scared. As you have not sent for them, and as you don't seem disposed to do so, they are beginning to fear that you don't want to make treaties with them, but are planning a general war upon them.

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They don't know how many men you have with you. You see, we made these French people think—with all our yelling and that sort of thing—that we numbered many thousands, and you have so rigidly excluded the Indians from the town that they don't at all know how strong or how weak we are. They're afraid you're only getting a 'good ready' to exterminate them all."

"That is excellent," answered Clark. "That is precisely what I want them to think. What has Hawk Camden told them?"

"Well, I'm afraid Hawk has lied a little. He has said that when we came here we had only a thousand men or so, but that additional troops have been coming up every day till now he can't count them. The Indians are scared, and it's my opinion they'll send delegations about to-morrow or next day to ask for treaties."

"Good!" exclaimed Clark "Excellent! But it is sooner than I had hoped. Now, I wish you to give special orders to the sentries to let no Indian—man, woman or

## THE TOBACCO'S SON

child—into the town until treaties are made. They must not find out how weak our force is. They must be out of whiskey by this time, and they'll be sending in for supplies. I want every one of them shut out. Go and give the orders, Tom, and add this order: If any Indian manages, under any pretext, or by any trick, to get into the town, he is not to be allowed to get out again. Give the orders yourself, not only at the gate, but everywhere else where a man might slip in or out. This is vitally important."

Tom promptly quitted his lazily recumbent posture and nimbly set off to execute his orders. At last he understood his chief's policy, and he saw that it was wise. He was accustomed to believe in George Rogers Clark, even when he did not understand that Napoleonic commander's policies. This time he understood them, and they seemed to him altogether good.

In the meanwhile, Clark was every day hearing good news from Vincennes.

Captain Helm reported by his couriers,

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that he had delivered to Tobacco's Son, the Grand Door to the Wabash, the message which Clark had sent him, and that it had had its effect. Tobacco's Son was a very Grand Door, indeed; so grand a door that it took several days to unlock it and to satisfy his extraordinary dignity. Clark's speech, with the belt of wampum which accompanied it, had evidently made an impression upon the Grand Door to the Wabash, but the Grand Door to the Wabash was a deliberate personage, not to be won over too easily. He had no mind to compromise his exalted dignity by yielding to the persuasions of a white commander without due delay and consideration and consultation, and all the rest of it. The rascal's mind was made up from the beginning, of course, but he had to go through the forms of mature deliberation by way of saving his dignity.

So, when Captain Helm delivered Clark's letter, with the belt of wampum, the Indian graciously replied that he was glad to meet one of the chiefs of the Long

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Knives. He said that he had united himself with the British, but that he had always thought they "looked gloomy." He pointed out to Captain Helm that the letter from Colonel Clark was a document of great importance, and that the matters presented in it were not such as could be decided in a hurry. He must consult his counsellors, he said, and he begged Captain Helm to be patient and allow him time for deliberation.

Captain Helm was equally dignified and ceremonious, so that it took a good while to bring the negotiations to anything resembling a result. At last, however, The Tobacco's Son, the Grand Door to the Wabash, informed Captain Helm that he now, for the first time, understood the war between the British and the Americans; that as the British and the Americans spoke the same language, and seemed to be the same people, he had felt himself in the dark as to the matter. Now, however, he said, the sky was cleared up, and he saw clearly that the Long Knives had the right of the matter.

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This meant, of course, that The Tobacco's Son, the Grand Door to the Wabash, was convinced that George Rogers Clark was the winner of the war game, and that the best policy the Indians on the Wabash could pursue, was to ally themselves with the Americans. Tobacco's Son added the suggestion, which was doubtless a potent consideration in his mind, that if the British should win in the war, they might treat the Indians as they had tried to treat the Americans. For that reason, he said, he would tell all the Indians on the Wabash never again to bloody the ground for the British.

Having said all this, The Tobacco's Son, the Grand Door to the Wabash, suddenly arose, slapped his chest and said:

"I am a man, and a big Injun. I am now one of the Long Knives, and I'll fight with them, not with the British any more."

Then he siezed Captain Helm's hand and shook it warmly. All the other chiefs did the same, pledging themselves thereafter to

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stand with the Americans, and not with the British.

It was a great victory, thus to detach from the British their Indian allies and to make Americans of them. And The Tobacco's Son, the Grand Door to the Wabash, kept faith like a man and a warrior, or "big Injun," which was the Indian equivalent for warrior—at least until the British came. He instantly sent out his runners to all the tribes over which he had any sort of influence, telling them that he had allied himself with the Long Knives, and urging them to do the same.

So overmastering was his influence—though we have no means of finding out upon what it was based—that almost immediately all the Indians, from Vincennes to Lake Michigan and the river St. Joseph, in what is now Indiana, swore allegiance to the American cause.

In the meanwhile, the Frenchmen everywhere, and especially the French gentlemen and men of substance, vied with each other in the work of converting the country

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into an American possession, its white people into American citizens, and its Indians and half-breeds into allies of the Americans.

## XIX

### A COUNCIL FIRE

THE influence of The Tobacco's Son was great, and so was that of the French gentlemen, to whom for generations past the Indians had looked for guidance, and whom they implicitly trusted. These Frenchmen were nearly all of them traders, who bought furs and the like of the Indians, and sold them blankets, sugar, salt meats, calicos, knives, powder and whatever else they wanted. After Clark's fair dealing with them at Kaskaskia, they very greatly desired that American influence should dominate the Northwest, and that the Indians should become allies of the Americans. They had three reasons for this. 1. The Americans offered them liberty instead of mere tolerance. Under English rule they were permitted, as a fa-

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vor, to practice their religion and carry on their trade, subject to some annoying restrictions. The Americans offered them absolute liberty, protecting them, both in religion and trade, precisely as all American citizens were protected. In a word, under British rule these Frenchmen were conquered subjects, while under American rule they were American citizens, equally free with all other American citizens.

2. These Frenchmen hated the British, with the intensity of a tradition of enmity that had endured through generations. They rejoiced in an opportunity to throw off a yoke that sorely oppressed them, and thus to deal a telling blow at their ancient enemies.

3. They clearly saw that if the Indians of the Northwest could be detached from the British interest and brought into alliance with the Americans a great, rich field for trade would be opened to them in Kentucky, Indiana, and the regions south.

Trade always thrives upon peace. Everywhere in the world and ever since

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the world began, the traders have been advocates and apostles of peace. The American alliance meant peace to the traders of the Northwest, and therefore they welcomed it and devoted themselves to its accomplishment.

They sent out agents to the Indians, urging them to seek peace with the terrible Long Knives, whose fierceness and power they exaggerated, but whose good disposition toward those who made peace with them they described as limitless.

But while all these messages were going out from The Tobacco's Son, the Grand Door to the Wabash, and from the French gentlemen of the Illinois whose influence was even greater than that of the "big Injun," not one word went to the Indians from George Rogers Clark, the conqueror. After his address to The Tobacco's Son, the Grand Door to the Wabash, he had sat silent by his camp fire, not deigning to solicit favors or to court peace, or even to suggest treaties.

To the Indians his silence and his ap-

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parent indifference to their attitude was the most alarming fact of all. They interpreted it to mean that he had somewhere within call a force so overwhelming that he could afford to treat their own doings with contemptuous indifference.

It was a daring policy that he pursued, but, as the result showed, it was a wise one, and it was successful. The now thoroughly frightened Indians, sent delegations to Cahokia and Kaskaskia to beg for treaties of peace with the Great Chief of the Long Knives.

Clark met their requests with courtesy, but with an indifference which still further suggested that he was too strong to care very greatly what the outcome of negotiations might be, or whether there should be any negotiations at all, or not.

It was only in response to their own urgent and insistent petitionings that he at last agreed to meet them, and to consider the matter of treaties. Arrogance had always been the chief capital on which the Indians traded. George Rogers Clark

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seized upon arrogance and self-confidence, and what the men under him called "bluff," as his own best resource.

When at last he met the Indian Chiefs in response to their urgent solicitations, he left it to them to open negotiations, assuming on his own part an attitude of sublime indifference, quite as if he did not care what the Indians might do or leave undone, quite as if he were able to cope with any situation they might choose to create, and quite as if any treaty he might make with them would be a generous and gracious favor granted to them by virtue of his good nature and not at all for the purpose of securing their friendship. It was his policy to convince them that the Long Knives were strong enough not to need their friendship and not to regard their enmity as a matter of much consequence.

The first great council was held at Cahokia, and it was evident from the beginning that the Indians were fearfully scared by the stories told to them by the agents of The Tobacco's Son, the Grand Door to the

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Wabash, and by the emissaries of the French merchants and traders. They were clamorous for peace and for treaties, and even the dignity of their great chiefs stood only slightly in their way.

It was the end of August, or nearly that, when this first great council assembled. Clark sat in state with only Captain Bowman and Tom Harrod by his side, and with Hawk Camden and Ike Todd, sitting on the ground behind him, ready to serve as his couriers if they should be needed.

The Indians, gorgeously decorated with beads and frills and feathers, were squatted upon the ground, facing him.

The Indians expected Clark to open the conference, but he did nothing of the kind. He sat still, saying nothing, as if he had nothing to say. He had not sought this conference. The "big Injuns" had asked for it. He wished that fact to be impressed upon their minds. They had wanted speech of him. Very well. He was there, ready to hear anything they might have to say, but while waiting for them to open nego-

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tiations he manifested no desire to say anything himself. He was the conqueror—they the suppliants. It was for them to tell him what they wanted. It was his well considered policy to make them understand that while he was generously disposed to grant any reasonable favors they might ask, he was himself asking no favors.

After a period of waiting, and seeing that Col. Clark did not intend to open the negotiations, an Indian chief arose, and carried a belt of peace to the American commander. At the same time another chief walked forward, bearing the sacred pipe of peace, while a third chief brought fire with which to light the pipe. When it was lighted the chief who carried it held it up, offering it to the heavens; then he held it down, offering it to the earth; then he waved it about in the air, offering it to all the good spirits. Then he invoked the heavens, the earth and all good spirits to witness what was about to be done.

After that the pipe was presented to Clark and then to all others present, each

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of whom took a whiff of it as a pledge of friendship.

That done, an Indian orator arose and addressed his brethren.

“Warriors!” he said, “you ought to be thankful that the Great Spirit has taken pity on you, and cleared the sky, and opened your ears and hearts, so that you may hear the truth. We have been deceived by bad birds flying through the land; but we will take up the bloody hatchet no more against the Long Knife; and we hope, as the Great Spirit has brought us together for good, as he is good, that we may be received as friends, and that the belt of peace may take the place of the bloody belt.”

If the Indians expected a gushing response—as they probably did, after their experience of the white men’s over eagerness for compacts of peace—they must have been astonishingly disappointed. For, in pursuit of his policy of arrogance and self confidence, Col. Clark refused to shake hands with the chiefs or to let any of his men do so. He coldly told them that he had

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heard what their orator had said, and that he would answer it on the morrow. Then, without any assurance of good will he dismissed them, retaining to the last his attitude of mastery and dictatorship.

The redmen passed an anxious night. Their fears had been already aroused, that the terrible chief of the Long Knives, remembering and resenting their alliance with the British, might not be willing to make peace with them at all. They had an enormously exaggerated notion of his military strength, and the course he now pursued, in dismissing them until the morrow, with no assurance whatever of a disposition to be friendly, filled them with anxiety and fearful apprehension.

That was precisely what Clark had intended, and there is every reason to believe that he slept better that night than the big "Injuns" did.

When they met again next day he sternly offered them their choice between peace and war, making no concessions, asking no favors, but laying down the law to them after

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the manner of an all powerful conqueror. He has himself reported the speech he made to them, and this is what he said:

“Men and warriors! Pay attention to my words. You informed me yesterday that the Great Spirit had brought us together, and that you hoped, as he was good, that it would be for good. I have also the same hope, and expect that each party will strictly adhere to whatever may be agreed upon—whether it be peace or war—and henceforward prove ourselves worthy of the attention of the Great Spirit. I am a man and a warrior—not a counsellor. I carry war in my right hand, and in my left peace. I am sent by the Great Council of the Long Knives and their friends to take possession in this country; and to watch the motions of the red people; to bloody the paths of those who attempt to stop the course of the river; but to clear the roads from us to those who desire to be in peace, that the women and children may walk in them without meeting any thing to strike their feet against. I am ordered to call upon the

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Great Fire for warriors enough to darken the land, and that the red people may hear no sound but of birds who live on blood. I know there is a mist before your eyes. I will dispel the clouds that you may clearly see the cause of the war between the Long Knife and the English; then you may judge for yourselves which party is in the right; and if you are warriors, as you profess to be, prove it by adhering faithfully to the party which you shall believe to be entitled to your friendship; and do not show yourselves to be squaws.

“The Long Knives are very much like the Red People; they don't know how to make blankets, and powder and cloth. They buy these things from the English from whom they are sprung. They live by making corn, hunting and trade, as you and your neighbors the French do. But the Long Knives, daily getting more numerous, like the trees in the woods, the land became poor and hunting scarce; and having but little to trade with, the women began to cry at seeing their children naked, and tried

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to learn how to make clothes for themselves. They soon made blankets for their husbands and children; and the men learned to make guns and powder. In this way we did not want to buy so much from the English. They then got mad with us and sent strong garrisons through our country, as you see they have done among you on the lakes and among the French. They would not let our women spin, nor our men make powder, nor let us trade with anybody else. The English said we should buy everything from them, and since we had got saucy, we should give two bucks for a blanket which we used to get for one; we should do as they pleased; and they killed some of our people to make the rest fear them. This is the truth, and the real cause of the war between the English and us, which did not take place for some time after this treatment."

Nobody ever made a clearer, more accurate or more enlightening statement of the conditions that brought about the Revolutionary War than this was. George

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Rogers Clark had a habit of thinking soundly and looking facts in the face. He also had that gift of expression which enables a man to set forth clearly the thought he has in his mind.

He waited for perhaps a minute, to let the Indians think over what he had told them. Then he went on.

“But our women became cold and hungry and continued to cry. Our young men got lost for want of counsel to put them in the right path. The whole land was dark. The old men held down their heads for shame because they could not see the sun; and thus there was mourning for many years over the land. At last the Great Spirit took pity on us and kindled a great council fire that never goes out at a place called Philadelphia. He then stuck down a post and put a war tomahawk by it and went away. The sun immediately broke out; the sky was blue again; and the old men held up their heads and assembled at the fire. They took up the hatchet—sharpened it—and put it into the hands of our

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young men, ordering them to strike the English as long as they could find one on this side of the great waters. The young men immediately struck the war post and blood was shed. In this way the war began; and the English were driven from one place to another until they got weak; and then they hired you Red People to fight for them. The Great Spirit got angry at this and caused your old Father, the French King, and other great nations, to join the Long Knives and fight with them against all their enemies. So the English have become like deer in the woods; and you may see that it is the Great Spirit that has caused your waters to be troubled, because you have fought for the people he was mad with. If your women and children should now cry, you must blame yourselves for it, and not the Long Knives.

“You can now judge who is in the right. I have already told you who I am.”

Then rising, and standing before them like the daring and defiant warrior that he was,—asking no odds, seeking no favors,

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making no whine or whimper,—he said, in a stern voice:

“Here is a bloody belt, and here is a white one. Take which you please. Behave like men, and don’t let your being surrounded by the Long Knives cause you to take up the one belt with your hands while your hearts take up the other. If you take the bloody path you shall leave the town in safety, and may go and join your friends the English. We will then try, like warriors, who can put the most stumbling blocks in each other’s way, and keep our clothes longest stained with blood. If, on the other hand, you should take the path of peace and be received as brothers to the Long Knives, with their friends the French, should you then listen to bad birds that may be flying through the land, you will no longer deserve to be counted as men, but as creatures with two tongues, that ought to be destroyed without listening to anything you might say.”

Col. Clark saw clearly that his oratory had completely won his Indian audience,

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but it was his policy to impress the Red Men as strongly as possible with his ability to take care of himself, and with his independence of them. He might have made the treaty he so greatly wanted, then and there, but he was determined that they should have no reason to suppose that he cared a pinch of powder about it, one way or the other. So instead of letting them choose at once between the white belt of peace and the bloody belt of war, he dismissed the council with these words:

“As I am convinced you never heard the truth before, I do not wish you to answer before you have taken time to counsel. We will therefore part this evening; and when the Great Spirit shall bring us together again, let us speak like men with but one heart and one tongue.”

## XX

### TOM'S HAZARDOUS JOURNEY

**W**HEN Clark met the Indian chiefs and orators next day, all was formality and the extreme of ceremony was insisted upon. The Indians, fearing the enmity of the Long Knives, and fearing also that Clark might refuse at the last moment to make any treaties at all with them, accepted his rigid insistence upon the forms and the etiquette of negotiation, as an indication of his strength of position and his absolute indifference to their own attitude, whatever it might be. The whole thing meant to them that George Rogers Clark, the conqueror, could crush and destroy them at any moment, but that on the whole, he was disposed to be kindly in his treatment of them, if they should behave themselves discreetly.

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With this understanding firmly fixed in their minds, they kindled a new council fire, and put forward their most persuasive orator to present their case. He said:

“We ought to be thankful that the Great Spirit has taken pity on us and opened our ears and our hearts to receive the truth. I have paid great attention to what the Great Spirit has put it into the heart of the Chief of the Long Knives to say to us. We believe all that to be the truth, as the Long Knives do not speak like any other people we have ever heard. We now see we have been deceived and that the English have told us lies, and that the Chief of the Long Knives has told us the truth,—just as some of our old men have always told us. We now believe that the Long Knives are in the right; and as the English have forts in our country, they may, if they get strong enough, want to serve the Red People as they have treated the Long Knives. The Red People ought to help the Long Knives and not the British, and we have, with cheerful hearts taken up the belt of peace, and

## TOM'S HAZARDOUS JOURNEY

spurned that of war. We are determined to hold the former fast, and we shall have no doubt of the friendship of the Long Knives, from the way in which they talk to us—so different from the way of the English. We will now call in our warriors and throw the tomahawk into the river where it can never be found. We will suffer no more bad birds to fly through the land, disquieting the women and children. We will be careful to smooth the roads for our brothers the Long Knives whenever they may wish to come and see us. Our friends all over the land shall hear of the good talk the Chief of the Long Knives has given us; and we hope he will send chiefs among us to see with his own eyes and for himself, that we are men, ready to stick to all we have said at this great fire, which the Great Spirit has kindled at Cahokia, for the good of all the people who might attend it.” \*

When the Indian orator had finished his speech, another Indian brought forward the

\* All the speeches made at these councils are copied here from Clark's own narrative.—AUTHOR.

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sacred pipe of peace, still another bearing coals with which to light it.

The chief bearing the pipe, offered it in the customary way to the heavens, to the earth and to all the good spirits of the air, praying them to witness the compact of peace. The treaty of peace and friendship was made. The Indians and the white men, after smoking the pipe, shook hands and pledged themselves to everlasting amity, or, as the Indians put it, to friendship "so long as grass grows and water runs." The Indians had no word expressing the abstract thought "forever," but they made the thought clear by saying "so long as grass grows and water runs."

This treaty concluded, all the other tribes in the Illinois country hurried to Cahokia and begged for like terms at the hands of Col. Clark. At the end of the summer he was complete master of the region he had set out to conquer—so far at least as treaties went. The French were his friends and the Indians were his allies. He had military

## TOM'S HAZARDOUS JOURNEY

possession of every town that the British had formerly held south of Detroit, and in appearance at least, his expedition had completely accomplished its purpose.

But Col. Clark knew better. In an intimate conversation with Tom Harrod, one night early in December, he explained in this wise:

“The British are still strong at Detroit, and they have behind them plenty of men, plenty of ammunition and plenty of provisions. They also have control of the Northern Indians—all those in the Michigan region and in the country north of the lakes and the St. Lawrence. At any time they please they can send an expedition down here with which we should find it very difficult to deal. You see we have less than two hundred men on whom we can depend—less than a hundred and fifty Long Knives. The Frenchmen are friendly and they want us to stay here in control. But they are traders who want peace at any price and who will side with either party that may

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happen to be on top. Very few of them are fighting men or disposed to become fighting men."

"And they are about all we have to depend on for holding Vincennes," said Tom, meditatively.

"Yes, we have only two Americans at that most important of all points—Capt. Helm and one private soldier."

"Do you think the Frenchmen will prove treacherous?"

"No. Not that. But if a strong British force appears, they will throw down their arms and race to their homes, just like so many rats running to their holes when a terrier appears. We can't depend upon them to stand up and fight, except when they are serving with American troops. You see, Tom, they are 'under hack.' They are conquered people. They have been whipped and they have given up. They're like the school boy who has cried 'nuff' in a fight. There isn't any more fight in them. Their young men who have formed a company to join us, mean all right, and so long

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as we keep them with us they'll do their duty like men. But over there at Vincennes the case is different. They haven't any Americans to encourage them, and as for the Indians—well you know how treacherous they are. They have made treaties with us, which they mean to keep with the utmost fidelity so long as we remain masters of the situation. But should the British become masters again, all the Indians from The Tobacco's Son down, will desert us and go over to them and all the Frenchmen will submit and go home."

The two sat silent for a while. Presently Tom asked:

"Why not take the bull by the horns? Why not march on Detroit itself, conquer it and shut the gate against the British?"

"We haven't men enough. I have sent express after express to Virginia asking for a thousand men. If I could get that many, I'd marshall all the Indians and make a final end of the British power on this side of the Great Lakes within a month. But Tom, they seem to be having use for all the

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men they can muster over there east of the mountains just now, and worse still, they don't look ahead."

"Just what do you mean by that?" asked Tom.

"Why, they don't see how much the possession of all this western country will mean to the United States, when Independence is recognized. If the British hold it, the United States will be nothing more than a fringe of settlements, shut in between the Alleghenies and the sea, and they won't be even that very long; for if the British hold this region they will drive every Long Knife among us back over the mountains, and then, when they get ready, they will attack the feeble little republic in the rear with overwhelming forces, and all the war work of the revolution will be completely undone. The revolting states will be reduced to the condition of conquered territories to be governed in any arbitrary way that British satraps may choose. But if we hold this country—as we must, at all costs and all hazards,—the United States will

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grow into one of the greatest nations on earth. All this region is a wilderness now, and the people in Virginia and the other states regard it as such. They do not see or understand as you and I do, how much it will mean when every acre of these prairies and woodlands is made a part of a farm on which men—vigorous, stalwart, fighting men—will grow as the corn does. I tell you Tom, I am going to hold this country for the United States, or die in the attempt. I have very few men, and it seems that I can't hope to get more. But the men I have are good ones, and I'll do this job, or else my bones will bleach out here on the prairies. It's a thing worth living for Tom, and a thing worth living for is a thing worth dying for, every time."

Tom rose and took his friend's hand in a warm clasp.

"You're right," he said, "and I for one will be with you to the end."

"Oh that's a matter of course," said Col. Clark. "You're a Harrod, and if ever a Harrod flinched or flunked or failed in his

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duty, I've yet got to hear of it. But I want you to go over to Vincennes, see for yourself how the land lies there, come back and report to me. You see, until all these Indian treaties are finished I can't spare a single man for Vincennes, and yet I am so uneasy about that post that I'll risk everything and send half my force over there if your information indicates that it is necessary. Bear in mind Tom, that we are here to stay, whether we stay as live men or dead men—as men standing on the grass or lying beneath it. I want you to start early in the morning, travel as fast as you can, and get back as soon as you can. Do you want a horse?"

"For the first day, yes. I'll ride him sixty or seventy miles and then turn him loose in the prairie grass. He'll wander back here at his leisure, and after that I can go on faster on foot."

It was obvious to Tom Harrod that his commander was very uneasy and exceedingly anxious for definite news from Vincennes. So he made all haste he could. He

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might have set out that night, but he knew the habits of horses. He knew that a horse sleeps only in the late hours of the night, just before the dawn, and he knew he could get more of travel out of his horse by starting after the animal should have had his sleep out, than by riding him throughout the night and thus robbing him of his rest. Tom knew a good many other things about horses, and, with his determination to accomplish this mission within the shortest possible time, he put all his knowledge to the proof.

He started at five o'clock in the morning. His horse being fresh, and young and full of spirit, he let him gallop for a mile or so. Then he checked him down to a trot, slowing that to a walk now and then for breathing purposes, and insisting upon a walk wherever there was a hill to descend.

On and on he rode until nearly midnight. The horse had acquitted himself well and nearly a hundred miles of the journey had been accomplished.

Then Tom, who had ridden without a sad-

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dle, turned the utterly exhausted horse loose to rest, to fill himself with the lush grass of a creek border in which the stop was made, and to wander back to Kaskaskia at his leisure, as Tom knew that the animal, prompted by the homing instinct, would very certainly do.

At five o'clock in the morning, Tom was up and off again. He did not stop to cook or eat breakfast. He had brought with him a large piece of cold boiled bacon and three or four pones of cornbread. These furnished him all the food he wanted, and his trusty rifle was a sufficient security against starvation when these supplies should be exhausted. He could at any time "arise, slay, and eat" of the abundant game that peopled the prairie during that dry season, and as an experienced Long Hunter, he knew how to content himself for long periods upon an exclusive diet of meat. So his commissariat in no way troubled him, and he put the miles behind him with little reck of anything else.

At Vincennes he heard alarming news. The British were advancing from Detroit;

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with regulars for their mainstay, but with volunteers, trained militia-men and Northern Indians in great numbers to reinforce them.

“Will your French inhabitants stand by you in the struggle for the possession of the fort?” Tom asked eagerly of Captain Helm, remembering Clark’s fears on that score.

“No. Not a man of them. When the British come they will run to their homes and hide there. These people want us to win, but they won’t do a thing to help us to win. You see, Tom, they are whipped and they’ve given up. They have enjoyed the pretty military play of garrisoning the fort so long as no enemy appeared, but they won’t fire a gun or even stay in the fort when the British appear. What we need is an American garrison—a little company of Long Knives—if it is only twenty-five or thirty of them. With twenty-five or thirty such men as you are, Tom, I could hold this place till the bottomless pit freezes over. But I haven’t the men and I want them. I want you to hurry back and tell

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Col. Clark what the situation is. If he can lend me the men I need—or one-third of them—if he can let you bring ten good Virginia Long Knives here I'll promise to hold Vincennes against any force the Hair Buyer General may send to recapture the post. Tell him so. But tell him also that my Frenchmen are already leaving me and going home, and that the only real force I have with which to defend the fort is one Long Knife and myself. Urge him, beg him, entreat him to send me a reinforcement and to send it quick. Tell him I need thirty men, but tell him if he can get only ten men here I'll hold the fort. Now go. I have an Indian horse ready for you. He can go for twenty-four hours without rest, and he's good for another twenty-four after four hours of rest. Ride him to death if need be, but as soon as possible get news to Col. Clark that the British are threatening us here, that I have no force with which to defend the fort, and that unless he can send some Long Knives to help me out this post

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must fall again into the hands of the enemy."

Tom mounted the tough Indian horse, and rode away, determined to ride the horse to death and after that to run Tom Harrod to death if necessary, in order to get his news through to Col. Clark within the briefest time possible.

## XXI

### TRIED AS BY FIRE

**I**T was noon when Tom Harrod set out upon his hurried return journey. In his haste to be off he was careless about rations, so that when he left Vincennes the only food he had with him was about a pound of cornbread, half a pound of raw salt pork, and two big potatoes which an enthusiastic half-breed boy had thrown into the pockets of his hunting shirt as he prepared to mount. But he had his rifle, and he did not fear for food.

It was just after dark when Tom ran into difficulties.

The country he had to cross was mainly a rolling prairie, the high grass of which was over-ripe and excessively dry because the autumn rains had been long delayed. But here and there was a little bit of timber-

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land, a miniature forest, and into one of these tree-peopled spots Tom rode, chiefly because he recognized it as one of the landmarks he had chosen on his way to Vincennes—one of the conspicuous points of departure which he might rely upon as a means of finding his way on this his homing journey.

His Indian horse had been galloping, after his wont, but upon reaching the edge of the little stretch of forest land, he slowed down to a dog trot, as if he understood that obstacles of one kind and another were likely to be met with in the timber land, and that high speed there was—to say the least—undesirable.

Even at a dog trot, however, the horse managed to carry his rider into difficulties. He came to a fallen tree and leaped it. As he did so four British regulars and a dozen Indians from the far north rose and confronted the boy, with their guns at full cock and their ready fingers threateningly near their triggers. They quickly and angrily pulled him to the ground, disarmed him, and

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two of them at once proceeded to tie him with leathern halters—binding his feet as if in fetters and drawing his elbows together behind his back with a painfully tight knot.

Tom had learned a little French during his boyhood, from an old Frenchman who had worked for his people. During his stay in the Illinois he had learned a good deal more French from the Frenchmen there, from the half-breeds and from the Indians, most of whom spoke something resembling a dialect of the French language.

So Tom decided to pass himself off as a Frenchman if possible, and to that end he refused either to speak or to understand English. When the Englishmen spoke to him in his own language he stolidly pretended not to understand a word they said. But when the Indians addressed him in their very bad French, he understood and answered.

As a consequence of this the four English soldiers felt free to talk as they pleased of the situation and Tom listened with both ears wide open.

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One of the four soldiers was a corporal and he seemed to have command of the party. The others questioned him.

"What are we sent out here for anyhow?" asked one of them, "clear away from the main body."

"Well, *that's* what we're sent to do," the corporal answered, pointing to Tom. "You see it has been nearly six weeks now since Col. Hamilton left Detroit with his army, and the Americans may have heard of the movement by this time. Now that he is getting close to Post Vincennes, he doesn't want any letters to pass between Vincennes and Kaskaskia. The Americans are at Kaskaskia, but if they got news of our coming they might make up their minds to move over to Vincennes in time to meet us and give us a fight. So my orders are to catch all messengers that may be traveling either way, and there's several other squads out on the same business."

"Aren't there Americans in the fort at Vincennes?"

"No. At least not more than two or

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three of them. Anyhow that's what I heard in camp last night. You see the Indians under Tobacco's Son, all pledged themselves to the Americans a few months ago, but now that Col. Hamilton is marching down this way, of course, they've all come back to us. That's the Indian way you know, particularly, when they see which side is the strongest, and this time that's us. They say this fellow Clark hasn't more'n about a hundred men with him—Americans, I mean, for the Frenchmen who have joined him don't count."

"Why not?"

"Why, because they won't fight and anyhow they don't care much who wins, so long as they can be friends with the winner. They aren't soldiers. They're just traders. Two of our men caught three of them from Vincennes yesterday. They were out scouting, just like real soldiers, but the moment our two men called to them to surrender, they threw down their guns and gave up, though they were three to two."

"How many men have we anyhow?"

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"Including the Indians, about five hundred."

"Then why should we be afraid of a hundred Americans?"

"We aren't. But don't you see if they got into Vincennes before we did, they'd shut themselves up in the fort,—and it's a strong one—and a good many of us would bite the dust before we could dislodge them."

"I shouldn't think they'd dare to make a fight with five times their own number."

"They'd dare anything. You never fought them down in Kentucky, did you?"

"No."

"Well, I have, and I never saw such men. They never know when they are whipped, and so they never are whipped till they're dead. Why, even their women fight; yes, and their children, too. I've seen little boys not over six or seven years old, shooting over a stockade, and they shoot to kill, too. For my part, I'm glad enough they aren't in the fort at Vincennes. By the way, we must search that Frenchman for the letters he's carrying. I forgot that."

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Accordingly they unbound Tom and stripped him to the skin. But, as we know, Tom had none but verbal messages for Col. Clark, and so his captors found no papers of any kind in his clothes.

The search over, they permitted him to dress himself, after which they bound him again. But as they were satisfied that he was only a spiritless Frenchman from Vincennes, they were not so careful with the bonds as they would have been had they known the facts.

After thinking for a while Tom believed he saw a way out of his situation. His hands were very flexible, and after secretly feeling of his bonds he was convinced that with some effort and perhaps a little pain, he might extricate one of his hands from the thong that held it fast. He was not sure of this, and so long as his captors remained awake, he dared not make any effort to find out about it. But after they went snoringly to sleep he began tugging at his bonds and after half an hour of effort

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and the loss of some cuticle, he succeeded in freeing his left hand.

That meant everything to him. With the free left hand he felt around his waist till he secured a hold upon his long knife. Silently, and taking pains to avoid attracting attention in any way, he severed the thong that still held his right hand in leash. Then, without rising or giving any other sign of wakefulness, he drew his imprisoned feet up to his body. At the moment that he did so, one of the British soldiers awoke, sat up, and after a little, rose and threw some wood upon the slowly dying fire.

Meanwhile Tom lay profoundly still, taking pains to breathe in stertorous fashion, like a man deeply sleeping.

When the English soldier had begun snoring again Tom slipped his long knife down to his drawn-up ankles, and, with a very gentle, sawing motion, succeeded in severing the thong that held his feet together. He did not bother further to free his ankles. His legs were no longer bound

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together. He could run. What did it matter that around each ankle there was a closely drawn strap? He was anxious to be up and away. Comfort was a secondary consideration, or no consideration at all, and he realized that any effort he might make to relieve his ankles of the straps that encircled them, must increase the danger of discovery. So he did not try to remove the straps, but contented himself with the fact that his legs were free and that he could run. The rest could wait.

Tom had been a hunter almost from his infancy. In his wily pursuit of game he had learned many lessons of prudence. One of these was never to do anything, or start to do it, until he had "got a good ready." That is to say, it was his habit never to act until he had thoroughly thought out the problem he had to solve, and had planned what he should do in every conceivable emergency.

Accordingly, instead of jumping up at once and making an effort to escape, he lay there for more than an hour, planning, be-

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fore he moved a muscle. At the end of that time he thought he knew exactly what to do and how to do it. He had thoroughly thought out all things that might happen, and he had planned to meet all emergencies. He did not intend to fail.

Slowly, silently, he rose from the ground. He seized a blazing brand from the fire, and silently he moved out of the woodland into the open prairie, where the over-ripe grass stood nearly as high as his head, and was sun-parched to the condition of tinder.

Just as he reached the borders of the grass his captors discovered that he had freed himself from his leathern bonds and was escaping. His blazing brand showed them where he was, and they very foolishly fired a volley in his direction. The chances were not one in a thousand that a bullet so wildly fired in the dark would reach its intended mark. In this case none of them did so. The leaden pellets whistled over Tom's head, harmlessly, and he continued to run through the long, dry grass.

But he knew that there were Indians with

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the British, and he knew that the Indians could outrun any white man. So as he ran he gathered a bunch of the dry grass in his left hand, and when he had got so much of it as he thought necessary, he applied his blazing brand to it without pausing for a moment in his flight, and when it blazed up fiercely, he scattered the bundle to the right and left of him, among the tall, standing grass of the prairie.

He had carefully noted the fact that the wind was blowing strongly from the northwest, and his own course lay toward the southwest.

So when he scattered the blazing bunches into the standing grass round him, there was an instant outbreak of fierce fire behind him, which the strong wind blew violently toward his adversaries.

No human being ever yet confronted a prairie fire of that sort and came through it alive. Tom perfectly knew that his adversaries must retreat in all haste to their woodland shelter where there was no prairie grass to burn, and he knew too that even

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there, with the prairie afire all around them, they would have to lie down upon their faces and take their breath from the surface of the earth, if they would avoid suffocation.

He knew that with the prairie once afire behind him he was safe from all danger of pursuit. Nevertheless he continued to run, making all he could of southwestward progress; for he knew that although the wind was blowing strongly from the northwest, the prairie fire while sweeping eastward at terrific speed, would also spread, though less rapidly, in other directions, and that if he did not hurry it would surely overtake and destroy him.

He ran on, and on and on, until at last he reached a woodland-bordered stream, one of the sluggish, muddy creeks that lace the prairie country, and that are fringed with little strips of cotton wood trees and swamp undergrowths.

Through the mud and mire of the lowlands he crossed the wooded stretches. Then he plunged into the creek and crossed it, partly by wading and partly by swim-

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ming. Safe on the other side at last, he toiled through the mire to the high ground beyond. There he pitched his bivouac for the few remaining hours of the night, feeling himself secure against the remotest possibility of pursuit by his enemies, and equally secure against any dangerous advance of the prairie fire westward, so long at least as the wind should hold to the northwest.

But the wind did not hold in that quarter for long. It presently shifted to the east. Then there came upon its wings a great, suffocating cloud of smoke, and Tom, knowing the nature of his danger, hurried to the stream and lay down in it, with his nose and mouth only a few inches above the water. He knew that the surface of that water was the very lowest level in all the region round about, and he knew that it was only at the lowest levels that he had a chance to breathe in that terrible atmosphere of smoke.

Unfortunately, the shift of the wind to the east brought with it a lower barometric pressure, so that the smoke, which would or-

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dinarily have floated upwards in the atmosphere, seemed to cling to the earth and even to the surface of the stream. Tom's eyes and nose and throat, and all his air passages were filled with the pungent vapor until he several times seriously contemplated drowning himself as the only way out of his agony.

The fire—spreading westward now, under the influence of the east wind reached the creek and leaped across it. Great acres of flame seemed to be lifted up and borne on the wings of the wind to the fire-hungry grass on the western side of the stream.

The heat was appalling in its intensity, so that the foliage of the cottonwood trees—ripe now in the autumn—was shriveled up and cast to the earth in crisp nothingness.

To Tom it seemed impossible to endure the torture longer. Then, to his relief the east wind brought a drenching rain to cool the atmosphere and dampen down the fires that had seemed to him to threaten the earth itself with destruction. The smoke was suffocating still but its density was so far di-

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minished by the putting out of the fire that he could breathe, and the fierce heat was after a little while so far tempered that he could endure it.

## XXII

### HARD TRAVELING

**I**T was nine o'clock or so in the morning before the conditions became such that Tom Harrod could look about him and plan his further proceedings. He was very hungry and he had neither food nor the means of procuring food. His rifle, his powder-horn and his bullet pouch had been taken away from him by his British captors. So also had been the meagre provisions with which he had left Vincennes. He was out there alone on the prairie, nearly two hundred and fifty miles away from friends or help, without a morsel to eat and without any of those means upon which he was accustomed to depend for food supplies in every wilderness.

Nevertheless he did not despair. His hunger was sharp but it was not yet agoniz-

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ing, and he knew that there are many things which a man may eat in an emergency. The rain was falling in torrents now, and Tom reflected that it would soon put out the prairie fire. He hurried forward, therefore, hoping to reach some unburned region where the chance of getting food might be better than where he was.

As he stumbled along in water several inches deep—for the prairie at that point was very low and as flat as a table, so that the water did not run off—he caught sight of a fluttering prairie chicken, which was alternately running and trying in vain to fly. He instantly gave chase, and after ten minutes or so he caught the bird. It was a very young prairie chicken, which had only recently left the nest and had not yet attained more than half its growth. Evidently it had been caught in the prairie fire. Its wing feathers had been so far burned off that it could no longer fly but it was otherwise uninjured, and to poor, starving Tom Harrod it meant breakfast. Pushing on for half a mile, he reached a little clump of

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trees, and there, with the aid of his tinder box he managed to create a fire and cook his bird. He had no salt, but he was well used to that deprivation on his hunting trips, and savagely hungry as he was, he devoured the bird with a relish keener than many persons living in more civilized conditions ever feel for the most daintily prepared viands.

Where his next meal was to come from, Tom did not know, but he was well used to such uncertainty, and his task now was to push forward toward Kaskaskia with all possible speed. After the fashion of the Indian runners, he adopted the dog-trot as his gait, and traveled at the rate of six or seven miles an hour.

Accustomed as he was to travel at this rate, if Tom Harrod had been even reasonably well supplied with rations, he would have covered a distance of sixty or seventy miles a day; or even, perhaps, a third more than that. But he had no rations at all, and much of his time must be given to the task of finding food.

During that day he continued to press

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forward. It was late in the season, but there are always some prairie chickens that lay eggs in the fall, and as he hurried onward he kept his eyes open for the nests of these. Fortunately, he found perhaps a dozen of the eggs, already roasted by the prairie fire, and these so far satisfied his hunger that he pressed on until nightfall without pausing to search for other food supplies.

But after he had slept, and when morning came, he found himself again savagely hungry. He had by this time reached unburned prairie, and as he hurried forward he stripped off handfuls of the sun-parched grass heads and chewed them as any horse might have done. There were minute seeds in them, and the starch and gluten of these somewhat appeased the pangs of hunger, but he knew he could not long keep up his march upon so meagre a diet as that. Presently he saw in the distance—ten miles away, perhaps—a fringe of cottonwood trees, which indicated the presence there of a river or creek, or at the very least, a brook.

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This gave him hope, for if he could reach a bottom land of any kind he was sure to find snails there, and earth worms; and Tom Harrod had more than once in his life been reduced to the eating of such food by way of averting starvation.

It was hard traveling through the tall and obstructive prairie grass, but Tom pushed onward, making all of speed that he could, and about noon he reached a little river, the water of which was comparatively clear, because of a stony bottom and a more rapid current than the streams in the flat prairie usually have.

Tom understood the significance of this, for since he had set out from the Ohio he had diligently studied the geography of the Southern Illinois country, and he knew now that he was on what is called the upheaval—the rolling region where streams flow less sluggishly than they do farther north, where the prairies are as flat as a floor.

There was a double joy to Tom in this discovery. It meant that he had made much better progress on his western jour-

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ney than he had supposed, and it meant fish. These more rapidly flowing streams were alive with large perch and catfish, but he had no means of catching those wary creatures. He had no lines, no hooks, nothing with which to make them his prisoners. But the shores of such streams were thickly thronged with little fish of the kind variously known as sunfish, goggle eyes, pumpkin seeds, bream, and by other names. These fish swarm about the shores, and they are not shy—indeed, they are almost tame. They vary in size from an inch long to four, or even five, inches. They are not much esteemed as food fishes, because their flesh is rather dry, but they are fairly edible, they are easily caught, and Tom Harrod's approach to a condition of starvation was so close that he was not disposed to be over particular about the quality of his fish.

The bed of the stream was a mass of stones—iron ore in the main—and Tom, for lack of better fishing apparatus, set to work to make a trap. He waded into the

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water, and collecting the stones, built a little semi-circular wall from one point of the bank to another. In the middle of the wall he left a little opening, into which he fitted one of the larger stones, so as to enclose the semi-circular space completely.

Having satisfied himself as to the fit, he removed this gate-stone, placing it where he might easily and quickly drop it into place, closing the gap, when the trap should be sufficiently thronged with fish.

Then he went into the creek borders and gathered worms of every kind he could find. These he broke into fragments, and with them he baited his pool.

It was not long before the foolish sun-fish swarmed in to feast upon the food he had provided for them. Then, wading, he dropped the gate-stone into its place, completely imprisoning the fish. After that his task was easy. He had only to wade about in the shallow pool, catch the fish in his hands, and throw them out upon the bank. Some of them were of fairly good size, but many were very small. He did

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not care for the difference or make any discrimination. A hungry man, with a long journey before him, is not apt to question his food supply too closely, as to its desirability. It is quantity, not quality, that one cares about under such circumstances, and Tom had quantity the more in mind, because he had decided that here was the best source of food supply he was likely to encounter on his journey. He determined to stay where he was until he should have secured enough of the little fishes to keep life in him during the remainder of his journey to Kaskaskia. Accordingly, although he was well nigh famished, he removed the gate-stone before proceeding to collect fallen twigs and make a fire and cook the fish already caught. And during the process of cooking and the subsequent eating, he several times paused to close his trap and to throw the imprisoned fish ashore.

By nightfall he had caught and cooked enough of the fish, as he reckoned, to last him through the remainder of his journey. He was by that time over tired, and after

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securing his supply of cooked fish against all possible enemies, he stretched himself upon the wet ground to sleep. About five o'clock in the morning he awoke and resumed his dog-trot through the cold, drenching rain storm toward Kaskaskia, where, without further adventure of any kind, he arrived about four o'clock one afternoon, and delivered Captain Helm's messages to Colonel Clark.

## XXIII

### THE FALL OF VINCENNES

**W**E already know something of what Captain Helm's message, sent by Tom to Colonel Clark, was. That message, in its fulness, as Tom delivered it, was in substance, as follows:

"Hamilton is nearing Vincennes with an army, which I have no force strong enough to resist. So far as I can learn, he has with him thirty-six British regulars, forty-five Detroit volunteers, whom he has been drilling for a year or more, so that they are now effective troops, seventy-nine Detroit Militia, seventeen men from the Indian Department—white men and trained soldiers—and four hundred well-trained and well-armed Indians, besides a full complement of officers, ranging in rank from Majors to Lieutenants. Moreover, Tobacco's Son and his people are fraternizing with the

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British again, after the treacherous fashion of the Indians, and they may swell his force to a thousand men before he shall get here. If I could depend upon the Frenchmen—the inhabitants of Vincennes—who have all sworn allegiance to the American cause—to stand by me and fight like men, I could easily resist such a force, or even destroy it. But the inhabitants will not stand by me. They will not fight, and nothing can induce them to do so. Their volunteers are already throwing down their guns, quitting the fort and sneaking off to their homes, where, I suppose, they will hide their heads under the bedquilts when the enemy appears. If I had thirty good men I could hold this fort and town till the Mississippi River runs dry—for the fort is really strong. But I have only one American soldier with me, and he is absolutely the only man who will stand by me when the enemy comes.”

To this was added the plea for reinforcements, which we have already heard Captain Helm deliver to Tom Harrod.

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Clark listened in silence while Tom delivered his message. After a while, Tom interrupted the silence.

"What's the matter with these Frenchmen?" he asked. "Why won't they fight for what they want? They really want us to hold this country, and if they would help, or even half help, we could do it easily."

"We'll hold it, anyhow, Tom," answered Clark, with that confidence in himself and in his Long Knives which was always his inspiration. "We'll probably have to fight desperately and endure many hardships, but we are going to win. If we don't, then not a man among us will ever see Kentucky again."

"But what is the matter with the Frenchmen? With a strong fort at Vincennes and Captain Helm in command, the people there who have sworn allegiance and enlisted as soldiers for the defence of the post, could clean out any force Hamilton can bring against them. They could even outnumber him, and they have the benefit

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of the fortification. I can't seem to understand it."

"That's because you were never whipped, Tom. Those Frenchmen are whipped, conquered, beaten. They have given up. There is no fight in them, as I have said to you before. They very eagerly want us to hold this country, but they have no spirit in them, and so, they won't help us to do it by fighting. In fact, they can't fight. They are no longer men."

"Why can't we march at once on Vincennes, ourselves?" asked Tom, "and defend the place?"

"The time is not ripe," answered Clark. "I am waiting for developments. At the right time I shall strike to win. But the right time is not yet. The British, with their allies, outnumber us now, and are too strong for us. But they can't hold their Indians long, unless they decide to assail us here at Kaskaskia. If they wait, they will weaken themselves more and more every day. If they attack us here, we'll have the advantage of a fortified position."

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“Then, you mean to let them recapture Post Vincennes?”

“They have probably done that, already,” answered Clark. “If not, they will do so within a few days—before we could possibly get there. For the present, my business is to hold Kaskaskia. When the time comes to do something else, we’ll do it. In the meanwhile, you see how it rains. I doubt that Hamilton will undertake a cross-country campaign in such weather. There’s two hundred and fifty or three hundred miles of wading, now, between Vincennes and Kaskaskia, with a good deal of swimming to boot, and the weather is bitterly cold. I don’t think Hamilton will undertake such a march. If he does, we’ll be ready to receive him, for I’ve got the Frenchmen here under enough of discipline to make them stand up and fight, at least, on the defensive. They can’t run home, for they know that in that case we’d fire on them from the rear. They’re worse afraid of us than of the enemy. But if Hamilton doesn’t march this way, but sits down at Vincennes

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and lets his Indians wander away, as they surely will, till he is seriously weakened, I may conclude to make the march myself. Our Virginians aren't afraid of wading, or of the weather. Anyhow, keep a close mouth and wait and see."

Clark was right in his conjecture that Hamilton would recapture Vincennes within a few days. On the 15th of December, 1778, the British commander appeared there in overwhelming force; the town meekly submitted itself and all the citizens who had so enthusiastically volunteered to garrison and defend the fort, threw down their arms and retired to their homes like so many whipped curs, with limp tails tucked between their legs. Captain Helm, with only one soldier—a man named Henry—to assist him, drew a loaded cannon to the gate of the fortress, and stood there with a lighted match, ready to fire upon the advancing British force. When Hamilton had advanced to within a few hundred yards, Captain Helm called out "halt!" and Hamilton halted. Then, the British

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officer demanded the surrender of the fort and all its garrison—for he supposed there was still a strong fighting force within the walls. In a great, big Kentucky voice, Helm replied that no man should enter that fort until honorable terms of surrender should be offered and accepted. Thereupon, Hamilton replied that if Captain Helm would surrender himself and his garrison, he and the force under his command should march out with all the “honors of war”—which meant with their arms in their hands, with their flag flying and without any kind of humiliation.

To Hamilton’s astonishment and grievous humiliation, the surrendered garrison, when it marched out with colors flying, consisted of Captain Helm and one man!

As Clark had foreseen, Hamilton did not advance upon the Illinois towns to drive the Long Knives out of the country. He had not enough of energy for that, or enough of military genius. But he sent several bands of his Indians to threaten the Long Knives, and by way of precaution, Clark

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ordered the evacuation of Cahokia—no longer a post of importance, now—and the concentration of his little force at Kaskaskia in preparation for an assault or a siege.

By way of further preparation, he burned every house in Kaskaskia that stood in the way of his cannon fire, and converted the entire town into a fortress.

But Hamilton did not advance. He was a man of irresolute mind and the smallest kind of courage. He had resolution enough to hire Indians to make raids, paying them, as we have seen, so much a piece for the scalps they might bring in, and in every other way instigating them to exercise their savage impulses in butchery and the desolation of peaceful homes. But he had not enough of courage to march against George Rogers Clark, even when he had a force many times outnumbering the Long Knives. Especially, he had not enough of energy to undertake a winter campaign that must involve sore hardships.

Having recaptured Vincennes, he sent his Indians to ravage the Kentucky borders,

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planning, when spring should come, to assemble an overwhelming force and drive the Long Knives out of the Illinois country, and then fall upon Kentucky.

He did not know the Long Knives, and he did not know George Rogers Clark. In the end he paid dearly for his ignorance.

## XXIV

### A CRITICAL SITUATION

**T**HE recapture of Vincennes by the British in mid-December, 1778, rendered Clark's situation at Kaskaskia extremely perilous. His force was so isolated that there was no hope of reinforcement, and the number of his men was so small that he could have little hope of withstanding a determined siege.

Bodies of hostile Indians were showing themselves threateningly in the region round about, and Clark confidently anticipated a concerted attack.

"I am going to stand my hand," he said to Tom Harrod one night, after the two had reviewed the situation. "You see, there's one thing that brave men can do in any emergency—they can die, and there are worse things that can happen to men than

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death in a good cause. But I'm planning, in case of a siege, to make these French people help us, like men."

"How will you do that?" asked Tom, whose growing contempt for the demoralized Frenchmen made him skeptical of any such possibility.

"I've trained my guns on the town," Clark answered, "and when the British appear for the purpose of assailing us, I shall order all the able-bodied French citizens into the fort, and give notice that if they fail to fight like men, I will open fire on their homes and utterly destroy the town before the British can take the fort. And I mean that, Tom. These people have got to understand that if they are with us—as they have sworn to be—they must fight with us. Maybe we can beat off the British—and maybe we can't; but one thing is certain—if we are beaten the Frenchmen must die with us."

In accordance with this plan, Colonel Clark concentrated his force at Kaskaskia,

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and collected there all there was of food in the region round about. Then, he compelled every able-bodied citizen of the town to come into the fort and be drilled as a soldier. Finally, he gave it out that if the British could not be beaten off, he would utterly destroy the town before surrendering the fort. "And even then," he said to the influential citizens, "I shall not surrender the fort. There is room enough on its parade ground for all of us Long Knives to be buried comfortably there, and when the British get possession they will find our corpses ready for the funeral ceremonies."

But the British did not make the anticipated attack. Hamilton was a mercilessly cruel man, and, in a certain methodical way, a thoroughly trained officer who could use superior numbers fairly well, but as a military commander he had no resolution or enterprise or vigor in him. Having recaptured Vincennes, it was his obvious policy to march at once with his overwhelming force and destroy the power of the Long Knives

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in the Illinois towns. Instead of doing so, he rested content with the possession of Vincennes.

His first act was to alarm and offend the people there by seizing and confiscating all the food stuffs possessed by the merchants of the town, paying them nothing, and thus reducing them to poverty and making implacable enemies of them. As they had not fought to hold their town and fort, Hamilton very justly held them in contempt, even as possible fighters, and regarded their enmity as something not worth considering.

But having Vincennes again in his possession, Hamilton put off further operations until spring. Winter had now set in severely. The streams were out of their banks and rising with every hour; the prairies were flooded, and a march would have involved more of hardship than the irresolute Hair-Buyer-General could contemplate with equanimity.

So he decided to wait until the prairies should become verdant in the spring, and

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then, in comfortable fashion, to march across country, crush George Rogers Clark, if he had not retreated meanwhile, and repossess the Illinois.

In the meanwhile, as has been said already, he sent most of his Indians southward to blockade the Ohio and to make murderous raids into Kentucky, hoping in that way to compel Colonel Clark, with his force, to hurry back to defend that region. The rest of his Indians secured a supply of whiskey in Vincennes, and then wandered away to their tribal homes in the North. Indians could never be held together for the humdrum work of garrisoning a place, when there was nothing of an active kind going on.

In addition to the Indian raids into Kentucky, Hamilton sent several bands to annoy and perhaps even to destroy Clark's force at Kaskaskia if Clark should not retreat to Kentucky.

Most important of all he planned an Indian war for the following spring, a war which he confidently believed would exter-

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minate the Virginians west of the mountains and make an end of American occupation. To that end he sent emissaries South to stir up the Creeks, Cherokees and Choctaws there. His plan was to recall all his Northern Indians to Vincennes in the spring, and fall upon Kentucky while the Southern Indians, in alliance with him and in his pay, should assail that region from the South. He confidently reckoned upon having many thousand red skins in all, together with a strong force of white men—regulars, volunteers and well drilled militia.

All this must wait, however, until the winter should be over and the floods gone. In the overflowed condition in which the country was at that time, and in the fiercely inclement weather that then prevailed, Hamilton deemed all campaigning—even on the smallest scale—impossible. Accordingly feeling himself secure, he permitted his volunteers and militia to return to their homes under a promise to come back to him as soon as spring should open.

It was a comprehensive plan of conquest,

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and in most ways a good one from a military point of view. The only weak spot in it was that it did not sufficiently reckon with the genius and indomitable energy of George Rogers Clark, or sufficiently take into account the limitless capacity of his Long Knives to do, to dare, and to endure.

George Rogers Clark had no news of all this for a time. Now that Captain Leonard Helm and his one Long Knife soldier were prisoners in the hands of the British, there was no one in Vincennes to send despatches to the American commander at Kaskaskia.

In his eagerness for news, Col. Clark after a while planned to send Tom Harrod on another expedition to the Wabash, in search of information, and the two consulted throughout long hours of the night as to plans and ways and means. Tom Harrod was a born fighter, and he urged Clark to let him take Hawk Camden, Ike Todd, and Sim Crane with him.

"You see," he explained, "we four fellows could put up a good stiff fight in case

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of necessity, and I had always rather fight than run. You see I don't think much of those British regulars. They aren't soldiers. They're hired men. And as for the French volunteers, you know what they amount to. We four fellows could clean out a whole company of them, and together we could fight our way out of any sort of situation, if we should find it necessary to fight out."

"I understand all that," answered Clark, "but the four of you, all armed, would get a good deal less of information than you alone will. And after all it is information that I want, and not fighting. So I think I'll send you alone, Tom. Perhaps I'll send Hawk Camden, too, the day after you start, so that if one of you gets caught or killed the other will have a chance to bring me the exact information I want."

"All right," answered Tom, "I'm ready for anything you choose to order."

"I know you are Tom. That's why I purpose to send you on this extremely delicate and dangerous mission. Get yourself ready

## A CRITICAL SITUATION

to start about the day after to-morrow. I don't want you to go sooner. There are some things here that may require attention."

The Colonel did not explain himself and Tom Harrod of course asked him no questions. In point of fact Col. Clark had reason to think it not unlikely that a certain band of hostile Indians, which was hovering near, might attack Kaskaskia on the morrow or the day after. He had sent Hawk Camden to find out all he could about the band, and Hawk had been gone now for nearly twenty-four hours. Hawk was an ideal scout for this sort of work. He could crawl through high grass without attracting attention. He could lie perfectly still for hours at a time, making no noise of any kind. He never coughed or sneezed or cleared his throat at such times, nor did he change his position in a way to disturb the grass above him. He had keen eyes and singularly alert and accurate hearing. On this occasion Col. Clark had given him only one instruction:

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"I want you to go and find out all you can about that band of red skins," he said, "and then come back and tell me. Take as much time as you please, unless you find that they are going to attack us immediately; in that case hurry back."

About an hour after Tom's talk with Col. Clark concerning the proposed trip to Vincennes, Hawk came stalking into camp, soaked to the skin by the heavy rain, with his knees, elbows, and chest thickly plastered with mud.

"Well, Hawk," said Col. Clark, "what's your report? What have you found out?"

"Well, they's twenty-one o' them Injuns, an' yestiddy,"—Hawk meant yesterday—"they was out in that patch o' trees about a mile north o' the town. They was purty tol'able drunk, so they wasn't a lookin' out very clost, an' I crawled up to the very edge o' the patch o' woods, an' counted 'em keerful like. To-day they has moved over to the patch o' woods northwest o' the town, an' I sort o' suspicion they's plannin' to

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make a dash on the cattle-pens. If so, they'll do it purty soon."

"Why do you think so, Hawk?"

"Kase they has got eight ponies with 'em, an' that there patch o' woods is so clost to town that ef a pony whinnied we'd hear it. The guards at the cattle-pens mout even hear 'em ef they was to stomp endurin' of the night. So they jest naturally wouldn't a' sot down thar unlessein' they was purty nigh ready for business."

Turning to Tom, Col. Clark very quietly said:

"Ask Capt. Bowman to report to me here at once."

Then turning to Hawk again, he asked:

"How long since you had anything to eat?"

"Sence about the middle o' last night," answered the mountaineer.

"Well, go and get a bite somewhere as quickly as you can, and then come back to me. Take anything you find to eat at any of the messes."

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Captain Bowman reported promptly, and Clark gave him his orders.

"I wish you to take fifty men, including ten mounted, and move quietly out of the town on the eastern side. Move over to the big gully that runs into the river; then go northward, as rapidly as you can, concealing your men in the gully on the march. When you emerge from the upper end of the gully, swing around to the west keeping well out of sight of the red skins who are lurking in the grove west of the town. Then, as secretly as you can, I want you to deploy your men on foot so as to surround the grove, except on the town side of it—covering the western side of it and lapping a little way over the north and south sides. It will take you an hour or a little more to put yourself in position, for you must make a wide detour to escape discovery. When your position is securely gained, if the savages haven't discovered you, let your men creep forward silently, closing in upon the woodland. The moment your presence is discovered, let the mounted men charge, the

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infantry following, with a yell. Fall upon the Indians with all your might, and try to drive them toward the town. I'll be waiting for them with the rest of the force, ambushed in the high prairie broom straw. If you can drive them in on me I'll take care of them. If they don't come my way at the first assault, I'll fall on them in rear and on both flanks and do them up. The important thing is not to let one of them escape to report the strength, or weakness, rather, of our force to the other bands."

As soon as Bowman's command cleared the town on the east, Clark led the rest of the force—except a strong guard which he left in the town—out into the tall, dead and rain-soaked grass on the west. Fortunately this growth extended very nearly to the edge of the town, so that without discovery he succeeded in putting the men into it. There, by his orders, they lay down upon the ground, slowly deployed into a curved line, creeping as they moved, so as not to show themselves above the grass, and slowly advancing toward the Indian-haunted wood-

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land. By Col. Clark's orders the two ends of the line were thrown forward, making a crescent of the whole. This was done in order to cover so much of the northern and southern sides of the grove as Captain Bowman's movement might leave open. It was Clark's purpose in this way completely to surround the Indians before attacking them.

The movement was very slow of necessity, as the men had to lie so low and move so cautiously; and even if it could have been made with greater rapidity, Col. Clark would not have permitted that. He wanted to give Bowman time to put his men in position.

Unfortunately for the plan of battle the Indians have exceedingly quick ears, and, lying so close to Kaskaskia, they were on the alert. About the time when, by Col. Clark's reckoning, Bowman should be coming out of the upper end of the gully, and long before he could complete his movement into the position assigned to him, one of Clark's men sneezed.

Almost instantly all the Indians rushed

## A CRITICAL SITUATION

forward to assail Clark's force, shouting like demons and firing as they came on. The Long Knives sprang to their feet and gave the red skins shout for shout and three or four bullets to their one.

There could be no doubt as to the issue of such a fight but Clark was chagrined to think that its prematurity would permit the Indians to escape the moment their first onset should be repulsed. Bowman was not yet on the other side of the grove to cut off retreat, as Clark had planned that he should be, and all because a man had been unable to control his desire to sneeze.

Indians never continue long in a losing fight. Their method always is to attack and, if their enemies stand firm, to run away. They did so on this occasion. After their first dash forward they turned and ran back into the grove, where they halted for a brief while, firing from behind trees at Clark's pursuing force.

In the meanwhile Capt. Bowman, the moment he heard the firing, had guessed the situation, and without making the intended

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detour, led his men at a full run, straight to the western edge of the grove. Just as he got there, the Indians, abandoning the unequal struggle, turned and ran again. They had gone less than a hundred yards when they ran into Bowman's line advancing at a full run, and fell again under a withering fire. Clark hearing the crack, crack, crack, of Bowman's rifles, set his men at a run and fell upon the savages in rear with demoniacal yells to emphasize the deadliness of the firing.

After the red skins were thus caught between two fires, the affair was one of minutes. Almost within the time that it takes to write it the struggle was at an end. Not a single Indian was left with a gun in his hand, not one had escaped, and but for Clark's and Bowman's stern control of their men, not one would have been left alive. As it was, most of them were dead where they had fallen fighting, and the rest were disarmed prisoners.

But the effect of the stroke did not end there. This had been only one of the several

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bands of hostile Indians sent into the Illinois by Hamilton, to annoy the Long Knives there. The summary destruction of this band, struck terror to the rest, and before another nightfall the friendly Indians reported that all the hostile bands had “gone to look for the big waters”—which meant that they had retreated to the region beyond the Great Lakes, from which they had come.

## XXV

### A NAPOLEONIC PLAN

**T**OM did not make the intended trip to Vincennes in search of information.

The information came of itself as it were. On the 29th of January, 1779, there came from Vincennes to Kaskaskia one Francis Vigo, a Spanish merchant, though an Italian by birth, who had interests in St. Louis, in Vincennes and elsewhere. He bore news of the utmost importance.

He told Col. Clark how arrogantly Hamilton had treated the people of Vincennes, confiscating their food stuffs and other goods without compensation of any kind, thus reducing them to poverty, and riding rough-shod over their sensibilities in other ways.

More important still, he reported that Hamilton had sent his Indians south and his

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French militia north to await the coming of spring, so that he had at most only eighty men and probably far less than that number in the fort at Post Vincennes, with three cannon and some swivels. He reported that Hamilton was resting easily, nothing being further from his mind than the possibility of an attack; that he regarded the overflowed rivers and the extreme severity of the winter weather as an insuperable obstacle to all campaigning, whether on his own part or on the part of his enemies. The floods and the fearful cold seemed to him a trusty bulwark on the one hand and a sufficient reason for inaction on the other.

Francis Vigo was not only a man to be trusted implicitly; he was a warm friend of the Americans, as the Spanish at St. Louis generally were, and above all his reputation for integrity, truthfulness and accuracy of statement was known and honored all over the western country.

Clark received his intelligence gladly, asking hundreds of eager questions in order to acquaint himself with every minutest de-

## LONG KNIVES

tail of the situation, every fact, big or little, that might in any way influence his own action.

In the first place he was relieved of all fear of an attack upon him at that time. It was certain that Hamilton had utterly abandoned all thought of a march against the Illinois towns during the winter, and as for the hostile Indians, that little skirmish in which Clark had so dramatically disposed of one of their bands, had satisfied the others of the wisdom of returning to Canada, whence they had come.

But Hamilton's plan of conquest during the following spring was a comprehensive one, and he had the means of carrying it out. He could muster forces so great that there would be no possibility of withstanding them, either in the Illinois or in Kentucky. If he were left to carry out his programme he would not only reconquer the Illinois, but, with the aid of the Northern and Southern Indians acting together as he had arranged to have them do, he would sweep over Kentucky, destroy the settle-

## A NAPOLEONIC PLAN

ments there and wipe out every vestige of American settlement west of the Alleghenies.

The situation was an appalling one, and George Rogers Clark had only about a hundred and fifty men with whom to meet it. Many years later he described it in a report which he made by request, to Thomas Jefferson and James Madison. In that report he wrote:

“We now viewed ourselves in a very critical situation—in a manner cut off from any intercourse between us and the United States. We knew that Governor Hamilton, in the spring, by a junction of his Northern and Southern Indians (which he had prepared for), would be at the head of such a force that nothing in this quarter could withstand his arms—that Kentucky must immediately fall; and well if the desolation would end there. If we could immediately make our way good to Kentucky, we were convinced that before we could raise a force even sufficient to save that country it would be too late, as all the men in it, joined by

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the troops we had, would not be sufficient; and to get timely succor from the interior counties [eastern Virginia] was out of the question."

It was in such a strait that the Napoleonic impulse and the Napoleonic genius of George Rogers Clark came to his aid. Seeing clearly that if he should wait for his enemy to perfect his arrangements and make his attack, that enemy would easily overwhelm him, he instantly decided not to wait but to assail the enemy on his own account before he should be ready. It was the Napoleonic policy of striking with the head of the column, the Napoleonic policy of defending oneself by assailing the enemy, the Napoleonic policy of hitting your adversary between the eyes before he expects you to hit him at all. And yet Clark had never heard of Napoleon, who was then a school boy.

It was a daring, a desperate thing to do. It was the inspiration of a hero, the conception of a desperado. Its audacity was altogether splendid.

George Rogers Clark decided to march

## A NAPOLEONIC PLAN

upon Vincennes at once, with his small force, and to risk everything upon the chance of destroying Hamilton before he should himself be ready to strike. Writing of this decision, in his report to Jefferson and Madison, Clarke explained, after the simple manner of a devoted soldier:

“We saw but one alternative, which was to attack the enemy in their quarters. If we were fortunate, it would save the whole. If otherwise, it would be nothing more than what would certainly be the consequence if we should not make the attempt.”

Accordingly Clark determined upon the desperate venture. How desperate it was, it is difficult to make a modern reader understand. Between Kaskaskia and Vincennes there stretched nearly two hundred and fifty miles of wintry wilderness. The prairies everywhere were flooded so that men crossing them must wade ankle-deep at the least, waist-deep or chin-deep for quite half the time, with now and then a stretch of uncertain distance that could be crossed only by swimming.

The winter was severe. The water every-

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where was at the freezing point, so that in wading the soldier must often break sheet ice and in swimming he must breast ice of a thicker and more difficult character. The food supply was exceedingly scant, and the means of replenishing it were few and uncertain. Even after enlisting all the young Frenchmen upon whom he could in anywise rely for faithful service, George Rogers Clark had no more than a hundred and seventy men with whom to undertake this desperate adventure, but with the truly heroic resolution that always inspired him in times of stress he instantly decided upon the venture, and to the eternal credit of his Long Knives he afterwards wrote that the enterprise "met with the approbation of *every individual belonging to us.*"

There indeed, lay Clark's strength. He had no cowards, no shirks, no shrinkers in his army. His fighting force consisted of brave, resolute, stalwart men, upon whose courage, energy and endurance he could implicitly rely—and *he knew it.*

He gave his orders accordingly.

## XXVI

### THE BEGINNING OF A TERRIBLE MARCH

**I**T was on the 29th of January that Francis Vigo arrived at Kaskaskia. It was on the 30th day of that month that George Rogers Clark finished his questioning of the merchant, and felt that he fully understood the problem with which he had to deal.

There was much to be done by way of preparation, but it was done quickly. The French people of Kaskaskia, Cahokia and the country round about, very eagerly desired the success of Colonel Clark's movement, and they lent themselves right willingly to the work of preparation. Clark's treatment of them had been in such contrast with that of the arrogant British commander that they looked with a terrible dread upon the possibility of again falling under Hamilton's rule.

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They, and especially the young women, strongly encouraged their young men to enlist with Clark, and enough of them did so to swell his force to a hundred and seventy men. There were enough of these young Frenchmen in the country to have given him a fighting force of nearly or quite twice that number, but they were a people who would not fight, and so he secured only about a score of them as recruits.

But he had the good will at least of all the people of the Illinois. Provisions were prepared, the enthusiasm was inspiring, and within a few days every man in the little army had all he could carry of food supplies.

But there could be no wagon train to carry reserve provisions. It would have been impossible to drive wagons over the prairies in their flooded condition, while the widely overflowed rivers and streams offered a still more insuperable obstacle.

Clark's little force must carry on the persons of the men themselves whatever of supplies they were to carry at all. For the

## A TERRIBLE MARCH

rest they must depend upon the success of their huntsmen in finding game on the now desolate prairie, from which pretty nearly all the game—furred or feathered—had retreated to escape the rigors of winter and of flood.

But George Rogers Clark—in spite of his desperate daring—was a prudent commander as well as a gifted one. He foresaw that upon reaching the region of Vincennes, his supplies, both of food and of ammunition—the two supreme necessities of military operations—were likely to be exhausted. He knew he must provide in some way for reserve supplies to meet him there. There was also the necessity of having some artillery with him, with which to assail and reduce the fort at Vincennes, and it was utterly impossible, under the flood conditions then existing, to take artillery across country and over the swollen rivers and creeks.

There were no steamboats anywhere in the world then or for many years afterwards. But there were boats on the Mississippi

## LONG KNIVES

river which could be propelled—though slowly and with difficulty,—up stream as well as down. These were known as keel boats, to distinguish them from flat boats. A keel boat was built something like a steam-boat's hull with a deck-house on top to hold freight. The boat was sharp at both ends, and along each side there was a "walk way" as it was called. The walk way was a flat platform about two feet wide, extending nearly the whole length of the boat. When it was desired to take a keel boat up stream eight or ten men were stationed on each walk way. They carried long poles, which they set at an angle in the water, their lower ends resting on the bottom, and their upper ends against the men's shoulders. The men walked toward the stern, pushing on their poles with all their might. When the first man reached the end of the walk way, he stepped off to the deck and walked back to the bow to set his pole again, each of the others following him in turn, so that the pushing never ceased for a moment, and the boat was made to travel up stream at the

## A TERRIBLE MARCH

rate of two or three miles an hour according to the swiftness of the current. If at any point the current was too strong for the boat to make headway by poling, or if the bottom was too soft for that sort of work, then the boatmen "cordelled" the craft instead. That is to say, they fastened a rope to a post on the side of the boat next the shore. This cordelling post was placed about one-third of the way from bow to stern, so that a helmsman, with his rudder, could steer the craft and keep her from running her nose into the bank. All the men except the steersman, would go ashore and walk along the margin of the stream, pulling upon the long rope, which was passed over each man's shoulder and seized by him in front.

Col. Clark was fortunate enough to find one of these boats at Kaskaskia—one of the largest craft of the kind that had ever been built. It was very strongly put together, nearly new, and in every way adapted to Clark's purposes.

Upon this keel boat he placed all the can-

## LONG KNIVES

non from the fort at Kaskaskia, so disposing the guns that they might be fired from the decks in any desired direction. Then he put on board all his reserve supplies of food and ammunition. This boat—the first fighting craft that ever floated on the western waters,—was named the “Willing.” She mounted two four pounder cannon and four large swivels.

Captain John Rogers was placed in command of her, and she had forty-six men for her crew, leaving Clark with less than a hundred and thirty men for his marching force. Clark ordered Captain Rogers to proceed with all haste down the Mississippi to the mouth of the Ohio, thence up the Ohio to the Wabash, and thence up the Wabash to the mouth of the White River, about twenty or twenty-five miles below Vincennes.

Captain Rogers sailed on the fourth of February—only a few days after Col. Clark had decided upon his daring movement upon Vincennes. He had orders to force his way up the rivers to the point indicated, and

## A TERRIBLE MARCH

there to secrete himself until Clark, marching overland, should give him further orders. But to cover all possibilities Clark directed him that if he found his presence discovered, he was to use his cannon and his riflemen in doing all the damage he could to the enemy. Especially Clark enjoined him not to retire from the Wabash so long as there was the remotest hope of the land expedition's arrival. At the same time, under Clark's instructions, Captain Rogers was so to conduct himself as to give no hint that a land expedition was expected or in progress.

Having started the gunboat on its way, Clark consulted with Tom Harrod, as it was his habit to do in every emergency. Tom Harrod was the only staff officer he allowed himself, and Tom was his personal friend. He felt that he could trust him as he could trust nobody else. He relied upon Tom's discretion, and better still, he knew that Tom's courage and daring were limitless, and that whatever charge he might give to

## LONG KNIVES

the boy would be executed with judgment and with a military precision that knew neither fault nor failure.

So, on the night after the gunboat started, Clark called Tom into conference. He explained:

"I have given orders that if the gunboat finds herself in difficulty after she gets into the Wabash, her men shall be set at work at once to build pirogues—dugouts, you know. The forty odd of them can make twenty pirogues in a day, and it will be a long time before the enemy can be a match for us on the water. In the meantime our problem is to cross country so quickly that we shall be at Vincennes as soon as the gunboat arrives at the mouth of White River.

"Now, the most difficult problem of our march is the moral one. If we can keep our men in spirits we can do this. If they become discouraged, there will be a disastrous end to our expedition.

"I am depending a good deal upon you, Tom, to keep the men in spirits. On the first day we shall march only three or four

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miles, and then encamp on a piece of high ground for the night. You know how hard it is, when troops have been in comfortable garrison, to disentangle them, and to reconcile them with worse and less comfortable conditions. I don't want them to be tired when they go into their first night's bivouac, and I don't want the conditions of that bivouac to be discouraging. It so happens that after wading ankle-deep for three or four miles, we shall come to a bit of high and dry ground. After a march like that the men will not be overtired, and the comfort of a high-ground bivouac will encourage them to go forward. Heaven knows they will need the encouragement in view of what is to come later. I shall depend upon you to help me keep them in spirits after that, and I'll talk with you about that to-night. But in the meanwhile I expect you to lead the wading, and to keep up a song as you go. You know how to sing, and the men know all your songs. I've found a fellow, with a banjo who will wade by your side, and keep it up with you. Sing the jolliest songs

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you know, and keep on singing them. Besides I have a drummer boy, who is a jolly fellow, who also plays the banjo, and I'll order him to march with you and the other banjoist, and beat time to your singing, when he isn't playing the banjo."

It was under these orders and under these inspirations of jollity that the little force set out on the fifth of February, 1779, to conquer an empire.

For the encouragement of the French recruits, Col. Clark secured the services of the priest, Pere Gibault, who celebrated mass, delivered a lecture to the men on their duty as soldiers, heard their confessions, and granted to them the church's absolution for all their sins, so that they might confront death in the discharge of duty, without fear of purgatory.

The little band set out gayly. Every man carried upon his person a pack holding such provisions as he could carry. Most of the men carried blankets, bought of the Indians. Close up under every man's right arm was a trusty powder horn. Attached to every

## A TERRIBLE MARCH

man's belt was a bullet pouch filled to the point of choking, with the leaden pellets which were depended upon to kill game on the march and to do execution upon the enemy when the opportunity should come. Every man carried a few spare flints in his pockets, and every man had his long knife in his belt, handy for all uses, from the carving of his food to the killing of his game, or—if need be—the destruction of his adversary in hand to hand conflict. The long knife was an implement of many uses, and it served them all well.

Having crossed the Kaskaskia river and marched the predestined three or four miles to the high ground selected for the first camping place, Clark remained there over the sixth of February in order to perfect his organization and complete his plans.

He devoted himself all day on the sixth to this task. He called his captains about him and explained to them precisely what he purposed to do, and precisely what each of them was expected to do.

He laid special emphasis upon jollity and

## LONG KNIVES

the necessity of keeping up the spirits of the men. Even on those first nights of the march he put aside his own dignity, assembled his men about him, set the singing going, joining in it himself right heartily, and improvising a dance on the prairie for the benefit of the Frenchmen.

George Rogers Clark was still a very young man then, and an extremely active one. He had learned, in boyhood, to "cut the pigeon wing,"—as a certain difficult exhibition of dancing skill was then called—and he and Tom Harrod gave amusing demonstrations of their skill in that peculiar gymnastic exercise. They even erected a little fence-like barrier of sticks, which a single touch would throw down, and, taking turns, would dance toward it, leap into the air, cut the pigeon wing over it, clap their heels together twice and descend on the opposite side without disturbing the frail barrier.

One after another of the men tried the trick, some of them failing to accomplish it, some of them doing it, but all rejoicing in the frolic, which was the thing that

## A TERRIBLE MARCH

George Rogers Clark was trying to bring about.

The camp was full of jollity. The men were happy and full of fun. The moral conditions were altogether favorable to the further progress of the march and to the ultimate accomplishment of the purpose with which the desperately daring expedition had been undertaken.

## XXVII

### WINTRY WORK

**A**FTER two nights and a day thus employed, the little company, whose task it was to conquer for the United States an imperial domain of the most fruitful country that ever was made, set out on its march.

Some of the men wore high boots made in Kentucky, some of them made of tanned leather and some of rawhide. Some wore Indian mocassins laced high upon the leg. Some, less fortunate, were barefoot except that they had wrapped their feet in prairie grass, or encased them in the skins of moles and such other "small deer" as the prairie afforded. All were ready and eager to march. All were in good spirits and their commander intended to keep them so.

To that end he gave to each company in

## WINTRY WORK

its turn—one company one day and another the next—the use of such horses as he had, and the privilege of riding at will over the prairie in search of game. In the evening the company so privileged for the day, was expected to give a feast, inviting the men of the other companies to join them. In this way a spirit of friendly rivalry was kept up. Each company tried to outdo its fellow of the day before in the work of providing game for the evening feast, and at every such feast there was all of frolic that the rollicking commander of the expedition could induce.

The march was toilsome beyond conception. In all but the very best and most favorable stretches of it, the men waded ankle-deep in water and half-leg-deep in the mud beneath the water. Often the wading was far deeper. When the company approached a river or creek, or even a lesser stream, there were bottom lands to cross, and these were overflowed to the depth of one or two or even three feet, while the soil beneath them was so far softened that the walking

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was scarcely better than it would have been if the mud had been made of soft soap.

The nights were sharply frosty, sometimes severely cold, so that when the march was begun early in the morning, the water was everywhere covered with thin sheets of ice which sorely lacerated the shins and the calves of the men.

But George Rogers Clark was always the first to plunge in, and he did so with a huntsman's shout, which presently changed to a song, in the chorus of which all could join.

At night there were blazing camp fires on such spots of high ground as it was possible to find, and then came a frolic that atoned to the men for the severity of the day's work. There was no whiskey, no artificial stimulant of any kind, and therefore there was no next morning's reaction. Between Kaskaskia and the Wabash river there was no town, no village, no hamlet,—not even so much as a country store or an isolated cabin. It was all wilderness absolute, unbroken and untrodden, except in the Indian

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trails. As a result, the mighty feasting of the men had no touch of drunkenness in them. Their jollity was only such as healthy men might enjoy in a natural way, and the sleep that followed them was refreshing and invigorating.

At that season, and in the overflowed condition of the country, game was exceedingly scarce. But such game as there was was easily captured for the reason that it had all fled to those little hill tops which were covered with tree growths. In the search for wild things that might afford food the men had only to visit these bits of timber land, sure of finding there whatever there might be of game left alive in the region they were traversing.

There was little enough of this. Now and then a little flock of prairie chickens was discovered, and a few of them killed while the rest alertly flew away to some other bit of timber land, five or ten miles distant. Once in a great while a poor, half-starved deer was discovered and secured. There were a good many squirrels and rabbits in

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some of the timber clumps, while in others there were none at all.

As the little army went farther and farther eastward, the prairie became lower and flatter, with fewer and fewer patches of timber land, until one night, with an overcast sky and a pouring rain to add to the dismal darkness, the weary men were obliged to make their camp in a place where the water was three or four inches deep. Col. Clark would have pushed on farther in search of higher ground if he had not known his geography too well. He knew that he was now approaching the stream known as the Little Wabash, and that the farther he should go the lower the level of the land and the deeper the water would be. There seemed nothing to be done except to halt the force where it was and let it sleep as best it might in three or four inches of water, without that most cheering of all camp adjuncts, a fire.

Then Hawk Camden's skill came into play.

"Ef you fellers will dig up the ground

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round here an' make a sort o' mound like, out'n the dirt, we'll have a rip roarin' fire in an hour or maybe in half an hour," he said.

"You've got to git your dirt from way over there," pointing, "'cause ef you take it from right round the fire you'll make a sort o' hole, an' with this flood on we don't want to sleep in a hole. Dig up the dirt way back there an' pile it up here till you make a mound four or five inches above the water. Make it broad enough to hold all on us, an' me an' Sim Crane an' Ike Todd'll do the rest."

Col. Clark did not know what Hawk Camden intended to do, but he had unbounded faith in Hawk's skill and ingenuity. So he set the whole force at work, digging up mud, carrying it in blankets, and depositing it in a pile at the point where the water was shallowest.

In the meanwhile Hawk Camden, Ike Todd, Sim Crane, and one other man, went away into the darkness.

By the time that the mound was built, Hawk and his companions returned with a

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blanketful of black stones, which they dumped upon the newly made earth island.

"What ye goin' to do with them rocks?" asked one of the men, incredulous of good from such a source.

"I'm a goin' to make the hottest fire you ever see out'n 'em," answered Hawk, "an' more'n that they ain't rocks. Them's lumps of outcrop coal."

"What's outcrop coal?" asked the other.

"It's coal what crops out in a creek bank or a hillside, an' the like o' that. I didn't know they was coal out here in the Illinois till I noticed it over there jest before the column halted."

"But what's coal, anyhow?"

"I dunno. But it'll burn better'n wood ef you give it a chance. I've tried it up in the Kanawha country. You wait an' see. Half a dozen of you wade down there to that drouded out drift pile an' bring a dozen or two dozen sticks of the drift wood over here. We'll go for some more coal while you're a doin' of it, an' then I'll show you what a coal fire is like."

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The men were incredulous. They had never seen coal burn, and they did not believe that Hawk Camden's "rocks"—muddy and water-soaked as they seemed to be—could by any possibility be persuaded to burn. But Col. Clark ordered them to do as Hawk Camden had directed, and, with some reluctance they waded over to the submerged drift pile and brought thence a number of water-soaked sticks. When Hawk returned with another blanket load of coal, he placed the two largest sticks of drift wood a few feet apart but parallel to each other. Then he laid other sticks across them and near together, thus creating something like a grate.

As he arranged all this he laid aside a stick now and then. These were mainly sycamore roots, and when the grate was ready, he shredded some of these to mere fragments. Then, with his tinder box, he created a little blaze on top of the grating of water-soaked sticks. Upon this he piled the rest of his shredded roots and upon them he piled the other sticks that he had laid

## LONG KNIVES

aside because of their comparative dryness.

When the blaze mounted up, he heaped perhaps a dozen bushels of the highly inflammable bituminous coal on top of the little fire. For a while the men were convinced that these muddy "rocks" were putting the fire out, but after a little time they kindled, and presently those nearest the fire began retreating from its excessive heat.

Then a shout went up for Hawk Camden and his "rocks," and the cooking began of such provisions as the men possessed. Among other things Hawk had that day managed to find and kill a small deer, so that he was in fact the host of the occasion. There was little else of food in the camp, for the supplies brought from Kaskaskia were by this time exhausted, and as the company had advanced farther and farther into the overflow of the rivers the supply of game had rapidly diminished until now nobody could find any live thing—nobody except Hawk Camden, whose knowledge of the ways of wild creatures seemed to give him a preternatural insight into the hiding

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places of every species of game bird or animal. And even he could find very little under the circumstances.

## XXVIII

### HAWK CAMDEN KILLS "GAME"

CLARK slept that night at the remotest corner of the mud bank, with Tom Harrod by his side, and the two talked in low tones for an hour before going to sleep.

"We've got the hardest part of our job before us," Clark explained. "We're now in the overflow of the Little Wabash. That is a river that runs nearly parallel with the Wabash, and empties into it about twenty miles below here. But the bottom lands between the two rivers lie very low and from all I can see, I reckon the two rivers are practically one now. That is to say the overflow from one meets and mingles with the overflow from the other, so that it's pretty nearly all water from here to Vincennes. The main thing is to keep the men's

## HAWK CAMDEN KILLS "GAME"

spirits up. We must sing and laugh and cheer as we wade on, and—"

"But can we wade all the way?"

"No, of course not. We'll come to the main channel of the Little Wabash to-morrow morning—indeed we aren't far from it now—and we've got to get across it mainly by swimming. Then—a little farther on we'll come to the Wabash itself. There I'll have some pirogues made to serve us as ferryboats. But I tell you, Tom, our greatest difficulty will be in keeping the men's spirits up. All this wading in ice-cold water is depressing, and from now on we'll be very short of food. The only thing is for you and me and the Captains to be as jolly as possible, and to talk a good deal about the feasts we're going to have when we get to Vincennes and capture all the provisions the Hair Buyer General has stored up there."

"Hold on, what's this?" said Tom, suddenly standing up.

"Why, the water is rising so fast that it has actually buried our mound."

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"No it hasn't," said Clark, who was a keen observer. "But this mud is very soft, and while lying here we've sunk into it. Of course, the water can't rise much on a night like this."

"How do you mean? Why can't it?"

"Why, simply because the rain has stopped and there's a very hard frost on."

"But how does that affect it?"

"Why, don't you see, the cold freezes the water that is in the mud and prevents it from flowing into the general flood. If you'll feel of your clothing you'll find it stiff with ice. So is all the mud in all these prairies. Every little brook, and every trickling stream of water smaller than a brook is freezing over, so that no more water is flowing into the flood."

"I hadn't thought of that," said Tom. "But why didn't the mud under us freeze so that we couldn't sink into it?"

"Because the warmth of our bodies prevented. We'll move over a bit and rest on firmly-frozen ground. It'll get soft after

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a while, under the influence of our bodily heat. Then we'll move again."

Thus a very uncomfortable night was passed and in the morning the French recruits were ready to quit in a body and go back to Kaskaskia. When they intimated their purpose to Col. Clark, he jeered at them, asking them how they expected to feed themselves on their return journey, and what they would say to the maidens of Kaskaskia, at whose suggestion and earnest instigation they had enlisted for the expedition.

"And what will those pretty black-eyed girls say to you?" he asked, "when you tell them that you quit just as the victory was within our grasp? They aren't the sort of girls to take cowards for their partners in the dance, and when it comes to marrying, I'll have all my victorious boys there to cut you out and to take the pick of the girls.

"Now listen to me. We have pretty nearly completed this march and we've got everything our own way. We'll be in Vin-

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cennes within a few days, and will be masters there. Hamilton has piled up food stuffs mountains high, and they'll all be ours. If you quit us and go back, you'll starve on the drenched prairies. If you stand to your colors and go on with us, you'll share with us in our glory and you'll soon feed so full on Hamilton's provisions that you'll wish you had an extra supply of stomach storage room in which to bestow more of the good things. But you can do as you please. You can play the part of brave men or you can play the part of cowards. Your course will have no influence upon ours. Whether you go with us like brave men or run away like sneaks, we Long Knives are going to march into Vincennes, capture the fort there, and fill ourselves full of the good food that Hamilton has so carefully stored up for us there. We're soldiers. We're Long Knives. We're Virginians. We are not the sort of men that give up in the face of hardship and privation. Those things only nerve us anew and stimulate us to fresh endeavors. I tell you again we are

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going to take Vincennes. You can go with us like men, or you can quit us like cowards. I do not care which you do. Neither do my Long Knives. You must choose for yourselves and let the bright-eyed girls of Kaskaskia and Cahokia decide what sort of men you are."

There was a double purpose to this speech and it had a double effect. It held the Frenchmen to their allegiance, and it stimulated the Long Knives to new courage and determination. After what their Colonel had said of their "grit" and their invincible endurance, they had a character to live up to, and every man among them was ready to die if necessary rather than falter in the hard duty that lay before them.

During that day the column, marching through water, came to the main channel of the westerly branch of the Little Wabash—a river that flows nearly parallel with the Wabash proper and ultimately empties into it.

The two branches of the Little Wabash lie within about three miles of each other,

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but in their overflowed condition the entire space between them was covered several feet deep with water.

Clark hurriedly set his men at work to make a large pirogue—a species of canoe—and when it was done, he ferried his men across the deep channel to the shallower water beyond. There he constructed out of drift wood a sort of platform above the water. Next he carried his baggage—mainly ammunition—across the deep water in the pirogue, and placed it on the platform to keep it dry. Then the men swam the pack horses across, and while the animals stood in the water three feet deep, they were loaded again with the baggage from the platform.

This work occupied three days, and when it was done the march was resumed, the men wading through deep water and deeper mud, which, of course, made their progress very slow. As the floods had driven all the game away, and as their provision supply was about exhausted, sharp hunger was added to cold and wet and weariness, until

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any less resolute men than these would have given up the task in despair.

At last, on the 17th of February, the column reached the Embarras River, a stream which empties into the Wabash, only a few miles below Vincennes.

The difficulty of crossing this stream proved to be so great that Clark abandoned the effort to do so, and set his men wading along its banks, following its course to the point at which it joins the Wabash. During the first night of this march down the river the weary, wet and hungry Long Knives got what sleep they could on a very small and very muddy bit of ground that rose a few inches above the water.

After three days of toilsome travel they reached the Wabash in a state of semi-starvation, for they had had no food whatever for two days and nights.

Clark found a little area of muddy ground above water, and there he pitched his camp, setting his men at work to build pirogues with which to cross the broad, raging stream.

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He had hoped to find the gun-boat *Will-  
ing* there, with supplies of food for the  
famishing men, but she had not come, and  
a scout, sent down the river to look for her,  
reported that there were no signs of her  
anywhere to be seen.

The Long Knives proved themselves to  
be as heroic in the endurance of hardship  
as they were in meeting danger. They  
made no murmur as they toiled at the task  
of constructing the boats, but Clark could  
not help observing that their physical  
strength was rapidly failing for want of  
food. The blows of their axes were grow-  
ing feeble, and they lacked that precision  
on which every pioneer, man or boy, prided  
himself. Their steps were shuffling and  
uncertain, their hands tremulous and their  
eyes dull and heavy.

In brief, these men were starving, and  
Colonel Clark saw clearly that they must  
actually starve to death if food were not  
soon found for them somewhere.

In this emergency the young commander  
talked with Tom Harrod.

## HAWK CAMDEN KILLS "GAME"

"Your friend Hawk Camden," he said, "seems to be able to find game even where there is none. Do you suppose he could go out and get us some meat?"

"Why not send for him and ask him?" queried Tom.

Hawk was sent for, and in reply to Clark's questioning, he made a suggestion.

"There's a fat pony among the horses here, and if you'll let me ride him out on the prairie, I think I might kill a Guyas Cutis, or some other strange sort o' bear or deer. Anyhow, I'd bring some kind o' meat into camp. But you see, I moun't bring the pony back."

Clark understood, and laughed. Then he said:

"Ride the pony, of course, and Tom will go with you on another of the horses, so as to help you bring back the meat, if you kill anything."

The two set off and rode through the water toward the only bit of high, wooded land that was anywhere within sight. It lay a few miles distant.

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When they arrived there, Hawk proceeded to kill the pony, skin it and dress it. Then he cut the carcass into shapeless pieces, saying:

“You see, Tom, they’s a *prejudice* agin eatin’ of horse meat, cause the Bible says you musn’t eat any sort o’ meat ’ceptin’ what comes from animals that’s got split hoofs an’ that chaws the cud. But its only a *prejudice*. Ef we’d a killed this pony in camp, a good many of the men would a’ hesitated to eat the meat, an’ in the same way, ef we was to take the meat back in a shape that the men could reconnize it as horse, some of ’em wouldn’t eat it. But by cuttin’ it up the way I’m a doin’, we kin pass it off on ’em as a new kind of deer or b’ar that lives only up here on the prairies, so’s our men ain’t used to it.”

Very cleverly the two men cut the meat into unrecognizable joints, discarding every fragment that might be readily recognized as horse meat; and having packed the pieces in two blankets, folded so as to make bags of them, they placed the load on the

## HAWK CAMDEN KILLS "GAME"

horse that Tom had ridden, using him as a pack animal. Then they set out for camp, wading and miring as they went, but feeling full of courage, for the reason that before leaving the woodland they had cooked and themselves eaten a considerable steak from the rump of the pony.

The camp, as has been explained, was pitched on one little island of high ground, high enough, at least, to be out of water. There, fires were built, and when the meat supply was brought in and the cooks began roasting and broiling it, there was some curiosity manifested to know what sort of game it was that Hawk Camden had killed. But Hawk was reticent, after his usual custom. For answer to all questions about his meat supply, he said only: "Eat it and see. There's a good many sorts o' game in these here prairies, which I don't know their names."

And the men did eat it. They fed full upon the pony meat and became jolly again, with renewed strength and reinvigorated courage to go on with their toilsome march.

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To George Rogers Clark, Hawk, respectfully touching his coon-skin cap, said:

“I reckon that pony’s got lost, somehow, Colonel.”

“It makes little difference,” answered Clark, “as I can’t carry any of the horses beyond this point. I must leave them here—probably to starve to death.”

“Well, anyhow, that pony didn’t starve to death,” said Hawk, as he turned away. Then, with a wink, he added: “Neither did the men.”

## XXIX

### A DAUNTLESS CREW

**A**BOUT noon, on the twentieth of February, a small boat was seen by Clark's sentinels, sneaking about among the trees on the other side of the river. Clark suspected that the five Frenchmen in it were engaged in a tour of observation, and instantly he ordered Tom to give chase in one of the pirogues that was nearly enough finished to be serviceable. Taking a crew of eight men to paddle, all of them carrying their rifles, Tom soon overhauled the Vincennes boat, and made prisoners of its occupants.

They proved to be Frenchmen from Vincennes—whipped men, conquered men, men with no spirit remaining in them, men ready to surrender at challenge. A mere frown on Clark's face so far terrified them that

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they readily gave him every detail of information he desired as to the situation at Vincennes.

They told him that Hamilton had only about fifty or sixty soldiers in the fort, and that he was no more expecting an attack by the Virginians than he was dreaming of the moon falling into his fortress. They told the American commander, also, and with a good deal of bitterness, how cruelly and brutally Hamilton had treated the French people of Vincennes, how he had taken from them nearly all the provisions they had possessed, how he had insulted and villified them as "traitors," because they had sworn allegiance to the American Republic, and how he had in other ways trampled upon their sensibilities, even to the extent of closing their churches, silencing their priests, and mocking at their religion.

Obviously these captive Frenchmen from Vincennes did not love the Hair-Buyer-General, and it was equally clear that their feeling toward him was shared by most of the French inhabitants of the town.

## A DAUNTLESS CREW

That night a terrific rainfall began, and when morning came, Clark was seriously afraid that with such a downpour, continuing hour after hour without so much as a moment's cessation, the flood in the rivers would completely drown him out, sweeping his little force helplessly away.

He therefore called his pirogues into use—even those of them that were only half done—and ferried his force across to the eastern side of the Wabash—the side on which Vincennes lay.

It was his hope to march into the town by nightfall and capture it without warning. But the floods were so great and the marching so difficult that this was impossible. There was "water, water everywhere," with only here and there a little island, and the water was intensely cold, so that in wading through it—ankle-deep, knee-deep, waist-deep, and sometimes even chin-deep—the men became chilled to the bone and so far physically depressed as to retain scarcely anything at all of their courage or endurance.

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But Clark inspired and encouraged them by personally leading them. He was the first man to plunge into the ice-cold flood, shouting, laughing and singing as he did so. He was accompanied by Tom Harrod, Hawk Camden, Sim Crane and Ike Todd, together with the banjo-player and the little drummer boy, who, in spite of all hardships, continued to behave like a comical little monkey, greatly to the amusement of the well-nigh exhausted men.

In some places the water was so deep that the banjoist had to hold his "music machine," as Hawk Camden called it, high above his head; but even in that position he continued to play his accompaniments while the others sang. The drummer boy, who was scarcely more than four feet high, sometimes found himself completely out of his depth. When that happened, he asked two of the others to "boost" him, and mounting his drum, he used it as a substitute for a boat, the others towing him along, while he "cut up his monkey shines," as the men phrased it. He might have got into one of

## A DAUNTLESS CREW

the pirogues if he had chosen, but he preferred to ride on his drum because it amused the men, especially when the drum rolled over, as it did every few minutes, dropping him into the water with a splash. He could swim like a duck, and as he was already thoroughly wet, he rather enjoyed these mishaps. Besides, they amused the weary men and kept them laughing, and the little fellow liked nothing so much as to make men laugh at his antics.

In these deeper parts the men had to hold their rifles above their heads, which added greatly to their weariness. The shorter men, for whose stature the water was sometimes too deep, were helped over the deep places by the taller ones, two of whom, grasping the elbows of a smaller one, would tow him forward until they reached water shallow enough for him to wade again.

In all respects this day's march was the most exhausting one the men had yet been called upon to endure. But worse was to come, as we shall see hereafter. Sometimes

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the weaker men would utterly give out, so that they simply could not take another step. When that happened, Colonel Clark would have the exhausted ones placed in the pirogues to rest, and when their strength came back, they took up the march again, giving place to others who had given out.

When night came, camp was made upon a little hillock, and the worn out men were permitted to rest. But they had no food, and they were well-nigh famished. The horses had been left behind, beyond the river, so that even Hawk Camden's ingenuity could not hit upon any device for supplying food, except that Hawk dug for himself a supply of earthworms and cooked and ate them. Hawk Camden had no prejudices that he permitted to stand between him and hunger.

The next morning there was a crust of thin ice over the margins of the water, so that the exhausted and famished men hesitated to take up the terrible march. By way of encouraging them, Colonel Clark blackened his face with gunpowder, and

## A DAUNTLESS CREW

with a Kentucky war-whoop, plunged in. The rest could do nothing less than follow their leader, and they did so. The drummer boy and Tom Harrod set the songs going, and kept them going.

But the struggle was one of terrific difficulty. The weaker of the men were so far exhausted that they would have lain down and perished in the ice-cold water but for the assistance of comrades who, taking them by the elbows, almost dragged them forward, encouraging them with the assurance that land was within sight ahead, where woodlands loomed up into view. But the woodlands proved to be a delusion and a snare. There were great trees there, to be sure, and there was an abundance of underbrush. But the water was deep around the roots of the trees which had seemed to promise dry land when seen from a distance, and the underbrush seriously interfered with the progress of the pirogues.

Slowly, toilsomely, but with camp songs to cheer them, the little company marched on, until about nightfall they reached a maple grove on a little knoll known as the

## LONG KNIVES

Sugar Camp, six miles from Vincennes. They were utterly worn out with their exertions, and the encampment for the night brought them nothing of cheer or encouragement, for—THEY HAD NOT ONE OUNCE OF FOOD TO EAT.

In very truth, these men, drenched to the skin, chilled to the marrow, and exhausted by the marching, were in a state of actual starvation.

But six miles away lay Vincennes, and there was food there in plenty. Tom Harrod—indomitable frontiersman that he was—suggested that after an hour's rest in the sugar camp, the march should be resumed by night and prosecuted to the end.

“Why not make a breakfast appointment in Vincennes, and keep it?” he asked. “Deep as the water is in places, we can be there before Hamilton fires his sunrise gun. We’ll find something to eat in the town, and then we can fall upon the fort and capture it, with all its stores, before dinner time.”

But Clark, who knew the limitations of human endurance better than the willowy

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Kentucky boy did, knew also the danger of a night march under such conditions—the danger, namely, of the scattering and disintegration of the fighting force. He knew that if the assault upon the fort was to be successful, it must be made by all his men, standing shoulder to shoulder and acting together with courage, strength and determination.

Accordingly, he overruled Tom's suggestion and decreed that the company should remain where it was for the night, the men getting what rest they could, thawing themselves out by the camp fires, and consoling themselves for their present lack of food by anticipating the feasts they were to enjoy in Vincennes twenty-four hours later, or less.

Colonel Clark was tortured by anxiety on more than one account. He gravely feared that his men, in their worn out and starving condition, might not be able to drag their weary limbs over the six miles of overflowed land that still separated them from the goal. And even if they should prove

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equal to that task, he still more gravely feared that they would fall fainting when they reached the town, and be utterly unable to maintain themselves in the fight that must follow if Hamilton should have spirit enough to come out of the fort and oppose their entry into Vincennes.

The gun-boat Willing had not yet come up, though the time set for her arrival was past by several days. He learned the cause of the delay a few days later. With the very high water in the river, the current had proved to be unusually strong, and in many places the water, even near the submerged and tree-covered banks, had been too deep to permit the poles to reach bottom. For a considerable part of the way, therefore, cordelling had been necessary, and with the water on top of the banks waist-deep, and sometimes breast-deep, and running very swiftly, the men had found cordelling a very slow and difficult process.

But Colonel Clark knew nothing of this until several days later. On that terrible night in the sugar camp he had every rea-

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son to fear that some party of British or Indians had captured the boat, with all his supplies of food and ammunition, with all the cannon he had depended upon to reduce the fort at Vincennes, and with the forty-six Long Knives, who constituted her crew—forty-six men whom he could in no wise spare from his very slender little army.

He had another cause of anxiety even worse than any of these things. He was expecting an express messenger with despatches from Virginia in answer to his apology for having usurped authority, and to his urgent appeals for reinforcements. As this messenger was long overdue, and as Clark knew that Hamilton's Indians were haunting the Ohio River, particularly in the neighborhood of the Falls, he was convinced that the man had fallen into the enemy's hands. If that were so, then not only must Clark be left for many months to come without despatches of the most vital importance to him, but Hamilton would receive those despatches within a few days, and learn from them how weak the force of

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the Long Knives was, and in what desperate straits it was placed.

There was no sleep for George Rogers Clark that night. With Vincennes almost within sight, the failure of his gun-boat to come up with food for his starving men, with ammunition, of which his supply was all too scant, and with the artillery he so sorely needed, threatened him with utter and disastrous failure. After all that the Long Knives had done and dared and endured, it seemed well nigh certain that they must fail and perish, because of some mishap to the gun-boat Willing.

It was a night of mental agony to the heroic young commander—an agony so great as to make him forget his physical sufferings.

Nevertheless, he did not lose his courage. He had set out resolutely to do this thing or to die trying, and if it must be death instead of triumph, at any rate he would die "game."

The night was intensely—bitterly—cold. Ice half an inch thick formed on the surface

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of the water that the Long Knives must wade through, and their drenched clothing was as stiff as sheet-iron when they awoke to their terrible day's work.

Fortunately, the day brought a brilliant blaze of sunlight with it, which was cheering and inspiriting. Clark made a speech to the men, telling them their terrible task was nearly done, and assuring them that their courage, endurance and patriotism would be celebrated in song and story so long as the American Republic should endure upon the earth. For, he explained, when Vincennes should be in their hands, they would be conquerors of a region greater than all Europe in extent, and more fruitful than any other land on earth. "Just think of it," he said. "When all this western country is converted into farms, just think of the millions and billions of bushels of wheat and corn it will produce! The people that are to come after us—our children and grandchildren—could build a range of mountains every year, from the lakes to the Ohio, out of the corn alone that will grow on these prairies. And every

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man among you is to have three hundred acres of the land for his own. Every man among you can build a mountain of his own out of his corn and his wheat, his rye and his oats, his barley and his hay; and when you get orchards going there'll be apples enough every year in this fruitful land, to supply all the world with luscious fruit. When this job of conquest is done and the British are finally driven out of this fair land, you men will make homes here, and breed a race of children worthy to succeed you. They will grow up into a manhood that will securely hold and defend the Republic you have helped to found. And they will be better men than you and I, for on every hill there will be a schoolhouse, and our children will learn the things that we have had no chance to learn. There will be academies and colleges, too, and great universities all over this land. Great men will arise to direct the affairs of a great Republic, and they will teach the people to honor you, as the men who won all this land to liberty by your heroism, your daring and your endurance.

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"We have only a little more to endure. This day's march will be a trying one, but it will be the last, I hope and believe. We must make it the last. We must sleep in Vincennes to-night, but not until every hungry man in this force shall have fed fat upon the provisions there. Our work is nearly done, and an abundant supply of food is only six miles away. Let us go and get it."

Then, with a whoop and a hurrah, he plunged into the icy water. As he did so, Tom Harrod and the drummer boy—whose spirits seemed inexhaustible—set up a song. They had together composed it during the night before, Tom composing the "song ballad," as he called the words, and the drummer boy fitting a banjo accompaniment to it.

This is the song they sang:

### A SONG OF VINCENNES.

Where there's bacon and corn bread, and  
spare ribs and chine,  
Rip rorey, rip rorey, rip rorey;  
And cider in plenty, we don't care for wine,  
Rip rorey, rip rorey, rip rorey.

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We've waded the waters and marched o'er  
the fens,  
And now we're to dine in the Fort of Vincennes,—  
We're to dine at the Hair-Buyer-Gen'ral's  
expense,  
Rip rorey, rip rorey, rip rorey.

We've not been invited and that sort of  
thing,  
Rip rorey, rip rorey, rip rorey,  
But for such circumflexions we don't care  
a ding,  
Rip rorey, rip rorey, rip rorey,  
At the muzzles of rifles our welcome we  
bring,  
And as we march onward we merrily sing  
Of the time when the bullets will zip and  
ping ping,  
Rip rorey, rip rorey, rip rorey.

The waters are deep but the shore's just  
ahead  
Rip rorey, rip rorey, rip rorey,  
And we've plenty of powder and plenty of  
lead  
Rip rorey, rip rorey, rip rorey.  
We have fought against wrong, we have  
fought for the right,

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We are going to fight again early to-night,  
And then we are going to sup and to bite,  
Rip rorey, rip rorey, rip rorey.

The men caught the refrain at the very first verse, and by the time the song had been sung twice or thrice, they knew the words by heart, and joined in the singing with a will that presaged nothing of good to the Hair-Buyer-General when these Virginia Long Knives should assail him.

But the task proved too great for the exhausted men to accomplish in that one day, as they had hoped, and when night came they made camp on a little hillock within full sight of the town. The men were utterly exhausted with cold, hunger and fatigue. So great was their exhaustion, indeed, that many of them had to be taken by the elbows by their stronger comrades and literally towed to the shore. There many of them, worn out, famished and half frozen, fell at the water's edge, with their bodies half on shore and half in the stream. There they would have perished but for the

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lingering energy of their weary and starving comrades, who, finding that the fires they quickly built did not suffice to restore the vitality of these worn out ones, seized them and forcibly ran them back and forth until their pulses once more responded to life's needs.

Nevertheless, all the men were starving—those who were still able to exert themselves as well as those who had succumbed. But for a lucky chance, George Rogers Clark would have been compelled to press on into the town that night, or else to suffer his command to perish there of cold, hunger and exhaustion.

That lucky chance was the capture of a canoe in which there was a very small piece of buffalo meat. In order to make the most of this small provision supply, Clark had it stewed into a broth, which he doled out to the men in small portions. At that point in the proceedings, Tom Harrod fibbed a little, and all the stronger men in the force joined him in his prevarication. He declared that he was not hungry, and

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all the stronger men did the same, leaving the scant supply of broth for the rejuvenation of their weaker comrades, and thus keeping the force up to its very small numerical strength.

But on that day Clark's men captured some prisoners from the town, and their stories, to his delight, confirmed what he had already heard as to the situation of things there, the strength of the garrison, and the disposition of the inhabitants. Then he called Tom Harrod and Captain Bowman into consultation. To them he said:

"I have been hoping to take the British by surprise, but while we have captured some of their scouts, others must have got away with news of our approach. They must know by this time that we are coming, but they don't know how weak we are, and we must fool them about that. We are within easy sight of the town, and I want you, Captain Bowman, to study the landscape and march the men about showing them first here and then there till scouts seeing them from the other shore shall think

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we number a thousand or so. And I want you, Tom, with the drummer boy, to collect the loudest singers in the force and go out on that hill," pointing, "and sing all your songs by a bonfire till late in the night. If we can't surprise them we may at least terrorize them. Then I'm going to send one of these prisoners into the town with the news that we're coming. I'll give him a letter to the inhabitants. In it I'll remind them of their oath of allegiance to the American cause. I'll tell them we are coming to conquer the fort and make prisoners of Hamilton and all his men, seizing for our own their ammunition and their stores of provisions.

"I'll say to them that if they value their lives they must go at once to their homes and stay there; that if any of them desire to join the British they must betake themselves to the fort at once and there fight like men; but that every man that I find in the streets with arms in his hands, will be severely dealt with as a sneaking enemy."

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“What’s your game?” asked Tom, whose curiosity was as irrepressible as his enthusiasm for the cause. “Why not let me go in to-night with half a dozen men and what Hawk calls ‘a multitude o’ noise’ and police the place till you get there with the rest of the force? I’ll guarantee that with Sim Crane, Hawk Camden, Ike Todd and two or three others, we’ll make them think there are a thousand of us; and we’ll see to it that nobody who values his skin a little more than that of a mole, shall leave his house till you give him permission.”

“That might do, Tom, if we had to do the thing that way. But in its present condition of exhaustion this force simply cannot wade the two miles that lie between us and the town until the men have had a night’s rest. Meanwhile I don’t want the British to enlist the French in their service. You see those Frenchmen are rats. They scamper to their holes at the first sign of danger. But a rat penned up in a corner will fight like a catamount—not because of courage, for he has none, but because of

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cowardly desperation. Now if the British manage to get those French rats penned up in their fort, we'll have a job on our hands to conquer them. If you went in with a squad and did business with your guns, every able-bodied Frenchman in the town would flee to the fort in terror, and in terror every one of them would fight us like rats in a corner. My plan is to notify them in advance; to impress their minds with the idea that we are here in overwhelming force; that we are certain to capture the fort, and that the best thing every Frenchman can do is to stay within his own four walls while we are doing the business. So I have prepared my address to the inhabitants, and I am going to send it into Vincennes to-night by the hands of a released prisoner. Then, to-morrow, we'll march in with no opposition. After we've had something to eat we'll assail the fort. Captain Bowman, please busy yourself in showing the troops and making the most of the showing."

Between the Virginians and the town lay a plain dotted with many ponds, on which

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wild fowl swam in great flocks. Clark's videttes saw many of the town's people on the banks of these little lakes, where they were busy shooting the wild fowl. Some of these citizens caught sight of Clark's force and of his camp fires, and gave the alarm at the fort. But Hamilton was so sure that with the country flooded as it was no army could approach, that he treated these alarms with contempt. He did indeed, rather as a matter of military form than otherwise, send out a scouting party of twenty men under Captain Lamotte, but these got themselves entangled in the swamps and neither found out anything nor succeeded in getting back to the fort that night to report their failure to discover any cause of alarm.

In the meanwhile Clark's letter to the French inhabitants of the town did its perfect work. They retired to their homes, and not one of them ventured to report at the fort that Clark had sent any such letter or even that he was approaching Vincennes. Those of the inhabitants who were in favor

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of the British cause, instead of going to the fort with the news and there fighting like men, as Clark had urged them to do, hurriedly left the town. So did two hundred hostile Indians who had been assembled there under arms, but in whose soul Clark's name inspired a peculiar terror. Without waiting even to learn how many Virginia Long Knives he might or might not have with him, they hurriedly retreated toward Detroit and safety, thus leaving Clark with nothing to assail but a completely submissive populace, and a slenderly-garrisoned fort whose commander was confidently assured of his safety by reason of the submerged condition of the country round about, over which it never once dawned upon his regularly military mind that a determined force of brave and enduring men could make such a march as that which the Long Knives, under their dauntless leader, had in fact made.

## XXX

### IN VINCENNES AT LAST

**I**T was seven o'clock the next evening when Clark's starvelings finally marched into Vincennes. With the precision of regulars the force divided itself into two parts. One of these surrounded the fort and opened a desultory fire upon it, just by way of establishing the condition of siege and preventing any one from escaping into the town or elsewhere. The other part of the force took possession of the town by way of enforcing Clark's order that the people who did not want to incur his vengeance should remain within their houses.

The townspeople received Clark's men joyfully. They had been long under terror of Hamilton's oppression, and they welcomed Clark as their deliverer although they could not in any wise guess how he had

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managed to get there. There he was, at any rate, and they accepted the fact as a miracle wrought for their deliverance.

There was no time for the feast which Tom Harrod's song had prefigured, but, seeing in what state of starvation Clark's men were, the Creole people hastily supplied all of them with hand luncheons of bread and meat, and under the stimulus of the food the men were wild to storm the fort immediately. They clamored for permission to force the gates without parley and wreak vengeance up the Hair-Buyer-General.

There is practically no doubt that with a single rush they could and would have gone into the fort and conquered it. But Clark was a wisely prudent commander as well as a desperately daring one. In the absence of the forty-six men who were manning the gunboat Willing, and who had not yet come up, his force was so small that he dared not risk the lives of his men in a dash, when he was assured of success by slower and less venturesome methods.

## IN VINCENNES AT LAST

He restrained the ardor of his men, and so posted them as to expose each of them as little as possible. So discreetly did he manage this that in all the fighting that followed he lost only one man wounded.

About eight o'clock in the evening, an Indian Chief, the son of Tobacco's Son, presented himself, and offered to bring all his warriors to Clark's assistance. But Clark was confident of his ability to accomplish his military purpose without savage help, and for many reasons he deemed it best not to involve the Indians in the affair. For one thing they would have butchered everybody in the fort, from Hamilton down to the negro scullion, thereby making the conquest a slaughter. In addition, Clark's own force was so small that he could not hope to control his Indian allies after their victory. On the whole he preferred to do this thing himself, so he told the son of the Tobacco's Son that all he asked of the Indians in this emergency was that they should remain neutral, taking neither the one side nor the other.

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The Creoles—that is to say the French people of Vincennes—also offered their help, and in some degree Clark accepted their offer. He permitted them to furnish him with powder and bullets, of which his supply was running very low, and he accepted the volunteered service of twenty or so of their young men who asked permission to participate in the fight. Wise diplomat that he was, he had a good and sufficient reason for doing this. He saw that if a considerable number of the Creoles should fight with him for the reduction of the fort, the whole Creole population—closely interrelated as they were—would be, by that act, permanently committed to the American cause. So he accepted the services of these young men and placed them on his firing line.

The British commander, Hamilton, was so confident that no enemy could approach, in the submerged condition of the country round about, that when Clark's men opened fire upon the fort he treated the affair with indifference, assuming that the shots came

## IN VINCENNES AT LAST

from drunken Indians, of whose vagaries in that way he had had large experience.

After Clark had satisfied himself of the submissiveness of the Creole population, he detached a part of his men to guard against possible relief from without, and with the rest he continued to fire upon the fort. He had no artillery—his guns being on board the gunboat—but his men knew how to shoot so straight with their rifles that the enemy simply could not man his guns. Whenever a British detachment undertook to man and fire a cannon, the Virginians poured so precise and so deadly a fire into the embrasure that the cannoneers had to quit their piece without firing it, or after firing one wild shot, and run to cover.

It was at this time that Clark played one of the boldest and shrewdest of all his games of war. He had learned from the Creoles that Captain Lamotte, with about twenty men, had been sent out on a scouting expedition. He knew that Captain Lamotte would try to get back into the fort. Accordingly he detached a part of his force

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with orders to capture Captain Lamotte and all his men. But when he learned that the Captain was too wily to fall into his snares, Clark determined upon another policy. He thought 'that Lamotte and his little company if kept out of the fort, might retreat northward, gather a force of Indians and return in overwhelming numbers to annoy him. He decided, therefore, that it would be wiser and better to let Lamotte make his way into the fort, so that he and his company might be captured with the rest of Hamilton's force, than to let him escape and come back with reinforcements.

Accordingly Clark, who knew that Lamotte was hiding somewhere about, ordered his men not to fire upon him if he should attempt to rush into the fort during the night, or at least not to fire until the men should be clambering over the parapets. As Clark's men were within sixty yards or so of the fort, they might easily have killed half of Lamotte's force, but under Clark's orders they refrained from firing until the British soldiers were actually scaling the

## IN VINCENNES AT LAST

palisades. Then they did some damage, but the main body of Lamotte's band got into the fort as Clark had planned that they should do.

An hour after midnight the moon went down and darkness fell upon the two hostile camps. Clark instantly set his men at work to throw up a fortification within short range of Hamilton's principal battery. When morning came the Virginians were securely entrenched, and with their truly wonderful precision in rifle shooting, they were in fact masters of the situation.

At sunrise on the morning of the 24th of February, these deadly accurate riflemen opened a destructive fire upon the embrasures—a fire so precise and so destructive that after a few futile shots, the British abandoned all efforts to man or fire their guns.

## XXXI

### THE LONG KNIVES TRIUMPH

**A**S soon as he had demonstrated the capacity of his Virginia riflemen to silence the guns of the fort and to keep them silent, Col. Clark, in a peremptory message, demanded Hamilton's surrender, with all his men, ammunition and supplies.

In view of the probability that some of Hamilton's scouting parties of Indians on the Ohio river had captured the express rider from Virginia now so long overdue, Clark felt it to be very necessary that he should complete the work of reducing this fort as quickly as possible; for while he had Hamilton shut in, so that his Indian scouts could not communicate with him, Clark was confident that upon finding what the situation was, the officers commanding the Indians would hurry messengers to De-

## THE LONG KNIVES TRIUMPH

troit with the captured despatches. In that case the authorities there, upon learning of Clark's weakness, would hurry forward a force to assail him. He felt it necessary to secure himself in the fort before that should happen. Accordingly he demanded Hamilton's surrender—and his summons was very haughty indeed. He warned the British commander that if he destroyed any papers before quitting the fort it would be the worse for him. In a word, Clark assumed the tone of a confident conqueror, dictating terms, and in effect threatening the British force with utter extermination if, by the hopeless prolonging of resistance, they should compel the Americans to take the fort by storm.

After Clark had sent in the summons to surrender, and while waiting for Hamilton's reply, the Virginians cooked and ate breakfast, the first orderly meal they had had for six days and nights of terrible hunger. Thus at last was fulfilled the promise of Tom Harrod's song, and when the meal had been eaten, the men were more clamor-

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ously eager than ever to march up to the gates of the fort and take it by storm. But Clark perfectly knew that, as he expressed it to Tom Harrod, he had "the rats in a trap," and could "settle the score with them without risking the lives of much better men." That risk would be all the greater for the reason that while the British were armed with army muskets, each supplied with a bayonet, Clark's men had no weapons but their rifles, no bayonets and even no swords with which to do hand to hand fighting. He meant to storm the fort if he must, but he earnestly desired to avoid that if possible.

"Even Hamilton," he explained to Tom Harrod, "may have enterprise enough to make a bayonet charge, and in that case many of our brave fellows would be sacrificed. I shall not needlessly waste such men. Besides we can accomplish our purpose without that."

Just as he was saying this a courier from the picket lines arrived to report that a party of Indians and Frenchmen in the

## THE LONG KNIVES TRIUMPH

British service were coming into the town. They had been off "gathering hair" for sale to the Hair-Buyer-General. That is to say they had been raiding the Kentucky border, at Hamilton's instigation, scalping men, women and helpless children. They were bringing back their hideous trophies in order that they might collect the wages of cruel and cowardly murder, which Hamilton had promised them. They knew nothing whatever of the presence of the Long Knives in Vincennes, but they were destined presently to have that fact revealed to their unsuspecting minds with startling suddenness and impressive emphasis. After waiting for three or four minutes to give the raiders time to get well into the town, Col. Clark detached one of his companies under command of a Captain, with the order:

"Attend to those butchers, and see that not one of them escapes."

Then to Tom Harrod, he said:

"I believe there are burying grounds in Vincennes. If not we'll open one."

The Captain who was charged with this

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business, marched his men hurriedly to a point between the raiders and the outer lines. Then he fell upon the party, the Long Knives assailing them with the fury of madmen.

The raiders promptly sought safety in flight, and to the chagrin of Clark's men, many of them made good their escape. But one of them was killed and eight were captured, with their strings of scalps upon them.

When Clark was notified of the result he quietly gave the order to bring the captured ones to him. The officer reporting spoke of these as "prisoners of war," and Clark promptly corrected him.

"I don't recognize the murderers of men and the scalpers of women and children as prisoners of war. They are criminals under arrest, hideous monsters to be destroyed. Bring them to me."

Two of those captured were Frenchmen, who had led the gang, and six were Indians. At first Clark intended to put all of them to death as a just punishment for

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their peculiarly atrocious crimes. But just as he was giving orders to that effect a Frenchman, who was doing good service as a lieutenant in Clark's force, came to him weeping and pleading for mercy to the captured Frenchmen, one of whom, he explained, was his own son. After much pleading and persuasion Clark consented to spare the lives of these two, while holding them as prisoners of war.

As for the six Indians, Clark had them taken to a point near the fort and in full view of it, and there he ordered them brained with their own weapon, the tomahawk. The proceeding was a cruel one, but it was just and necessary.

"These Indians" Clark afterwards explained, "had tomahawked not only many men, but many helpless women and many innocent children, including even babies in arms. It was only fair that they should themselves suffer the cruel death they had inflicted upon so many victims."

It was necessary to punish them in this impressive fashion by way of warning the

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other Indians round about, to impress them with the terror of the vengeance the Long Knives were capable of wreaking, and to show them that the British could no longer protect them in the crimes they had hired them to commit.

At first Hamilton haughtily declined to surrender, but when the Virginians again opened fire upon the fort, picking off, with deadly precision, every man who ventured to expose any part of his person to their mercilessly accurate aim, the British commander sent out another flag of truce asking for a cessation of hostilities for three days, for purposes of negotiation.

This was precisely the one thing to which Clark would on no account consent. He was determined to secure possession of the strong fort before any force from without could come to Hamilton's rescue. He therefore rejected the proposal, but sent Hamilton word that if he desired to negotiate, the two commanders might meet in a neighboring church, with Captain Helm, who, as we know, was still a prisoner in

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Hamilton's hands, as a witness to whatever might be agreed upon.

The conference was held as arranged, and Hamilton agreed to surrender the fort, the garrison, and everything the fort held in the way of arms, ammunition, papers and food supplies.

The surrender was arranged on the twenty-fourth of February, and on the next morning the Hair-Buyer-General marched out and laid down his arms, surrendering himself and the seventy-nine men under his command as prisoners of war.

Thus ended in complete victory one of the most remarkable military operations recorded anywhere in the history of war.

The young backwoodsman, with a mere handful of followers had literally conquered a region as vast as all Europe. He had made perhaps the most painful and difficult march ever made, through icy floods and over morasses that might well have baffled the most daring of men. With a little company of untrained hunters, armed only with rifles, without artillery, without bayonets

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and without swords, he had assailed and conquered a strong fort, garrisoned by regulars and armed with cannon. He had made an end of the British power. He had made himself complete master of the great West. He had saved to this nation of ours the fairest region that was ever won to liberty by the exertions of brave and heroically enduring men.

President Roosevelt, in "The Winning of the West," sums the matter up in this wise:

"Much credit belongs to Clark's men, but most belongs to their leader. The boldness of his plan and the resolute skill with which he followed it out, his perseverance through the intense hardships of the midwinter march, the address with which he kept the French and Indians neutral, and the masterful way in which he controlled his own troops, together with the ability and courage he displayed in the actual attack, combined to make his feat the most memorable of all the deeds done west of the Alleghanies in the Revolutionary War." \*

\* This passage is quoted here with the courteous permission of Mr. Roosevelt.—AUTHOR.

## XXXII

### AFTERWARDS

CLARK was now absolute master of the Illinois country, and his hold upon it as an American possession was never afterwards broken. But there was still much to be done by way of settling and confirming his conquest.

In the first place he must dispose of his prisoners, and his own force was too small to permit any considerable detachment of men to guard them. Moreover the intensity of the hatred that Hamilton had aroused among the borderers by his encouragement of Indian forays, was so great that it required all of Clark's authority and all of his almost boundless influence to protect his chief prisoner from the fury of his followers.

He decided, after some consideration, to

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send Hamilton and twenty-seven of his men under secure guard to Virginia as close prisoners, and to parole the rest of Hamilton's followers—all the men of less account and less influence—permitting them to return to Detroit and to Canada, under an oath-bound pledge to fight no more against the Americans.

In the meanwhile the gunboat Willing had at last come up, thus giving Clark a reinforcement of forty-six Long Knives and all the cannon and ammunition that the Willing had carried.

The men who had been on board the Willing were chagrined in an extreme degree when they learned that they were too late for the fighting and that without their help their comrades had captured the town and secured possession of the fort. But, as we know, it was in no possible way their fault that they were belated. They had done their best. They had toiled ceaselessly, night and day, against difficulties that even their courage and endurance found it difficult to overcome. And, after all, their de-

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lay, while it had subjected Clark's force to a good deal of hardship and privation, had not marred the ultimate results of the expedition.

They were at Vincennes at last, and their coming was a relief to Col. Clark. For just at that time news came to him that a party of forty Frenchmen from Detroit was coming down the river in boats, loaded to the water's edge with goods of every kind. These cargoes were valued at fifty thousand dollars.

Now that the forty-six men who had constituted the crew of the *Willing* had rejoined him, Col. Clark was able to detach fifty men under Captain Leonard Helm for the purpose of capturing this rich store of supplies.

Captain Helm placed his men in boats, arming each boat with a swivel but depending far more for effective war work upon the rifles, which were carried along, each man having his own gun by his side, and his powder horn and bullet pouch on his person.

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The expedition was completely successful. Captain Helm fell upon the Detroit party, overcame them, and captured the rich freighting without the loss of a man or of a single pound of the merchandise.

In view of this capture and of the enormous stores already seized in the fort, Clark was able to make his Long Knives "almost rich," as he reported in his memoir, by the distribution of desirable goods among them.

At the same time he did not neglect the people of Vincennes. So far as was possible he returned to them the provisions and other goods that Hamilton had wantonly seized, thereby cementing the already strong friendship between the Creoles and the conquering Long Knives.

The coming of the gunboat *Willing* greatly relieved Clark's mind in another way. On its way up the river the boat had picked up the express runner from Virginia, for whose coming Clark had long and anxiously waited and whose capture he had so greatly feared. The despatches this man brought announced that Clark's usur-

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pation of authority to re-enlist his men, and all his other acts, were fully approved and legalized by the government at Williamsburg.

The despatches also announced the coming of some small reinforcements. These reinforcements were not sufficient to enable Clark to carry out his pet plan—which was to march on Detroit itself with eight hundred or a thousand Long Knives, capture the stronghold, break the British power there and make an American possession of all Western Canada.

At that time indeed it was utterly impossible for Virginia to spare a sufficient reinforcement for such an undertaking. For the British in the east had by this time shifted the scene of their operations to the south. They had captured Savannah and Charleston (then called Charles Town) and were overrunning Georgia and the Carolinas, while Benedict Arnold, the traitor, was cruelly ravaging Virginia. Under the circumstances, every man in Virginia was sorely needed there, and the only wonder

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is that the authorities at Williamsburg felt themselves able to spare even a handful of fighting men for Clark's reinforcement.

The promised reinforcement — which presently arrived—was sufficient at least to enable the commander of the Long Knives to render secure the conquests he had already made. He established sufficient garrisons at Vincennes, Kaskaskia and Cahokia, to hold all that land securely. The French people everywhere rejoiced when they saw how completely Clark had made himself master of the Illinois, and how helpless the British were ever to reconquer that country.

As for the Indians, the very name of George Rogers Clark inspired them with sufficient terror to keep them in subjection and to compel their good behavior. During the remainder of the revolutionary period, the Indians of the Northwest gave no further trouble, and intercepted letters now in the government archives, show that even as far south as Louisiana, the fear of Clark and his resistless Long Knives com-

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pelled savage tribes to peace when, but for their fear of him, they would have made destructive war.

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Tom Harrod, Hawk Camden, Sim Crane and Ike Todd, remained with George Rogers Clark so long as he had any work to do in the Illinois. When at last he returned to Corn Island, they went back to their Kentucky homes.

Tom Harrod invited Hawk Camden to go home with him and be his guest for a time. Hawk was eager to get back to his haunts on the Holston—or rather in the mountains that are near that river—for Hawk lived always in the mountains where, as he said: “A feller can breathe, an’ not be a jostlin’ up agin other folks all the time.” But on the journey from the Illinois to the Falls, he had seriously injured one of his feet, so that he dared not yet set out on his return.

He remained for a month with Tom, while nursing his injured foot. When at last he found himself able to travel, he an-

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nounced his purpose one day to start on the morrow.

"I say, Tom," he said, "about this here gov'ment land business, you know Col. Clark says us fellers is to have three hundred acres apiece somewheres over there in the Injianny country. I ain't got no use fer no land out here where they ain't no mountings, an' where folks calls every little piece o' risin' ground a hill. Besides that I ain't no farmer an' never will be none. I'm a hunter. So ef you don't mind I'll sell you my sheer in that there land. I'd ruther you had it than anybody else."

"But I haven't any money with which to buy it, Hawk," Tom answered.

"They ain't no money needful, Tom. I jest naturally don't want to live out this here way, an' so I don't want my sheer o' that there land. When the time comes to draw it an' *locate* it, you can jest draw my sheer an' *locate* it adjinin' your sheer, makin' one piece out'n it. When you git your farm agoin' an' thrivin' an' prosperous, like, an' when you're a makin' lots o' money

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an' don't owe nobody nothin' you kin send me twenty dollars may be, ef you're a mind to do that, an' that'll squar us. Ef you ain't a mind to do it you needn't, an' that's all they is about it."

The next day Hawk bade Tom and his people good-bye, shouldered his rifle, and with a little sack of meal and a piece of bacon for his only supplies, set off on his homeward journey.

A little later the government set apart a hundred and fifty thousand acres of finely fertile land in the river bottoms north of the Ohio, for distribution among George Rogers Clark's men. Tom received his own and Hawk Camden's land warrants, and went at once to select the tract that best suited him. Then, selling out his mother's little farm in Kentucky, he removed the family across the river where all set to work to clear fields and bring under cultivation as much of the land as they could manage.

It was very slow work at first, for the timber on Tom's land was heavy. But his two younger brothers were growing up

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now, and young as they were they were expert with their axes and hoes, so that at the end of the first year Tom found the family abundantly provided with food for the winter. He had brought with him from Kentucky two cows and three or four brood sows, and the pigs they brought to him provided the family with plenty of pork and bacon for the winter.

Each year his fields were enlarged and his cattle and hogs increased in number so that by the end of their third year of farming, Tom and his brothers—tall fellows now, and strong—had a considerable supply of bacon, corn and other farm products for sale. They loaded these upon a flat boat, and took them to New Orleans, for the revolutionary war had ended in American Independence a year or two before that time, and under an arrangement with Spain the people along the Ohio and Mississippi rivers were allowed to trade with the Southern city.

Out of the money he received for his produce, Tom sent Hawk Camden twenty-

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five Spanish silver dollars—"twenty for the debt and five for interest" he wrote.

A few months later the money came back to him by the hand of an emigrant with the news that Hawk Camden had died a year before from the bite of one of his pet rattlesnakes. The sheriff, who sent the money back to Tom with the letter, informing him of Hawk's death, added:

"He ain't lef' no kinfolks to klame the munny."

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THE END.

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